



LIBRARY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

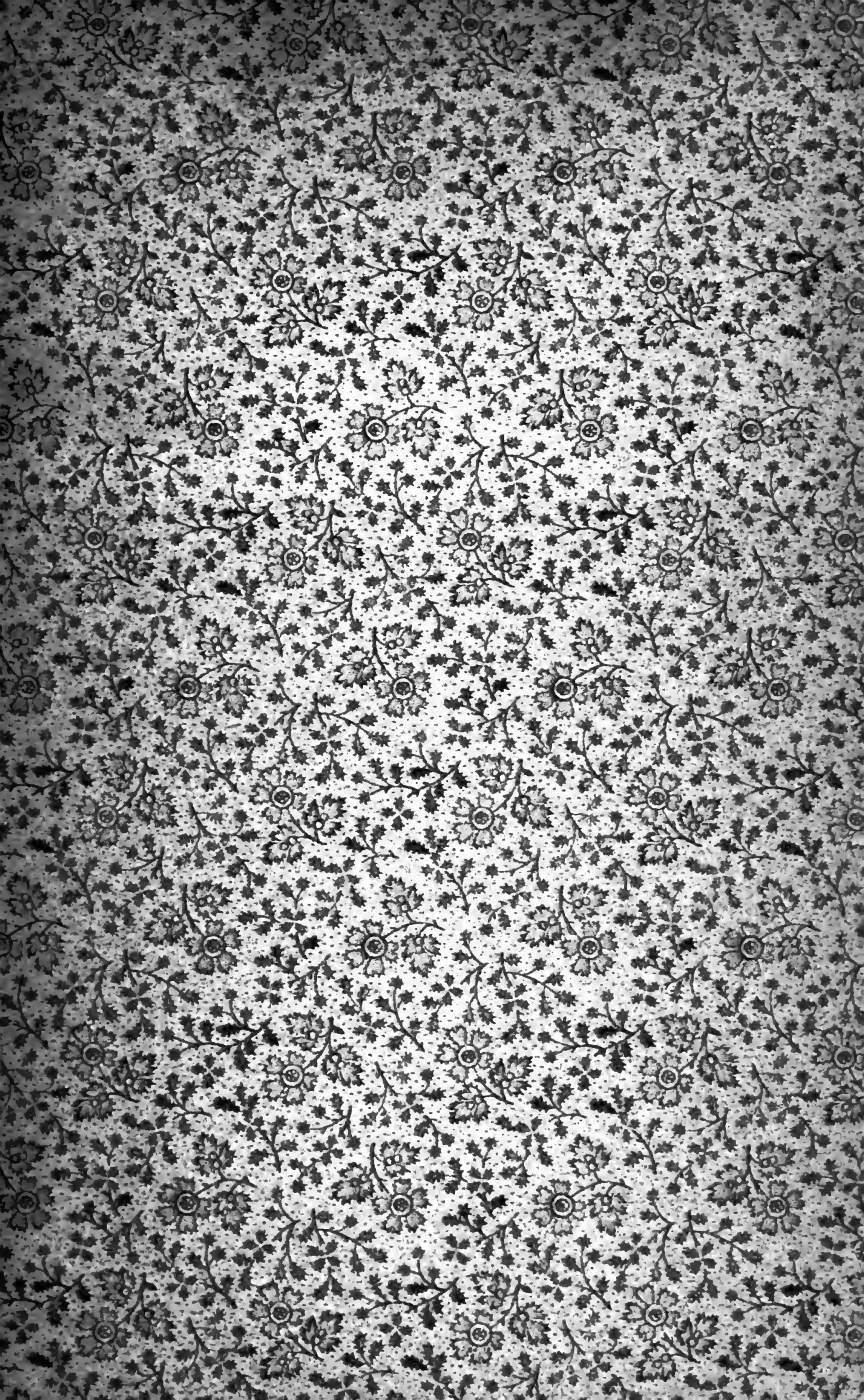
GIFT OF

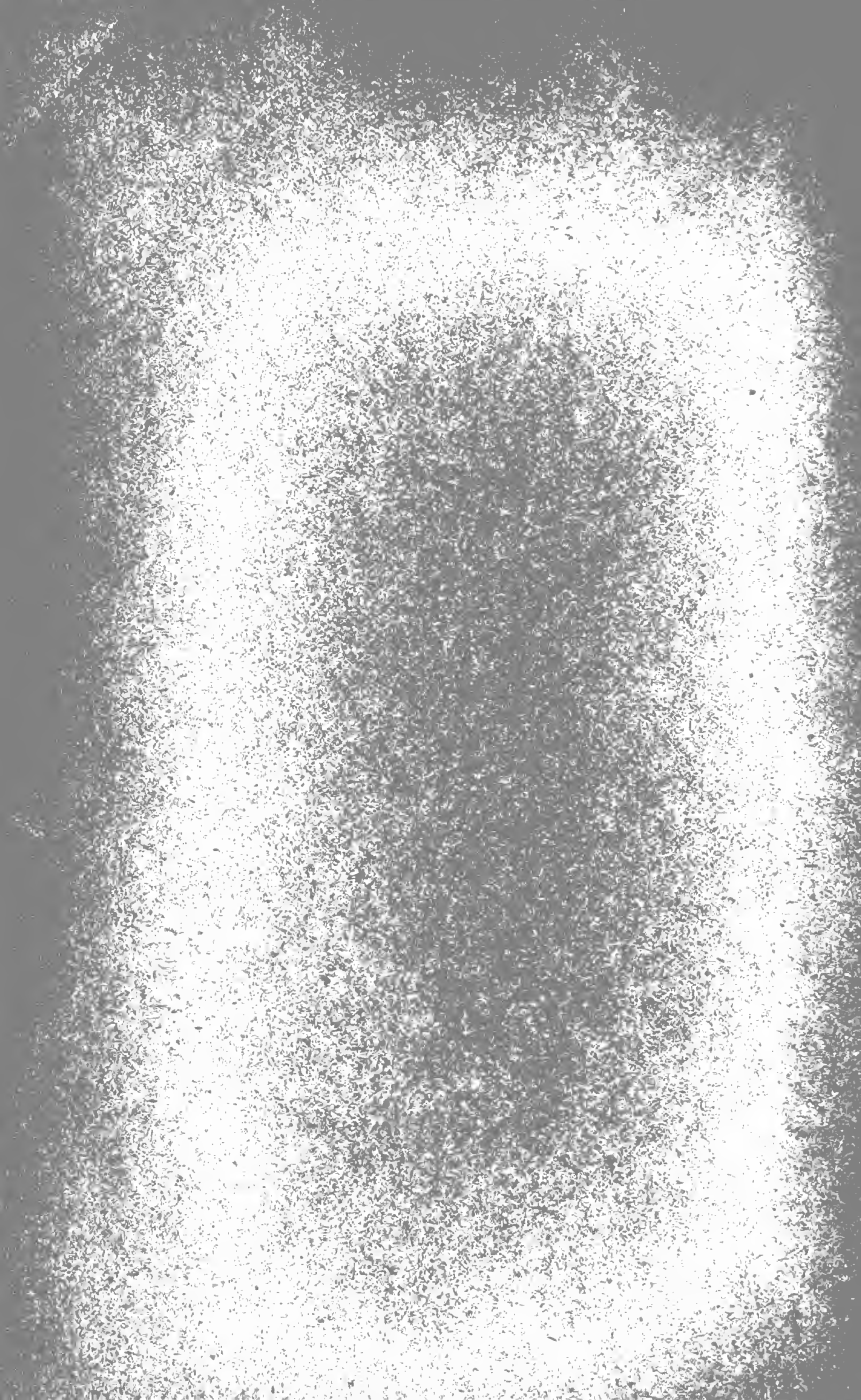
*Rev. Geo. W. Stone.*

*Accession*

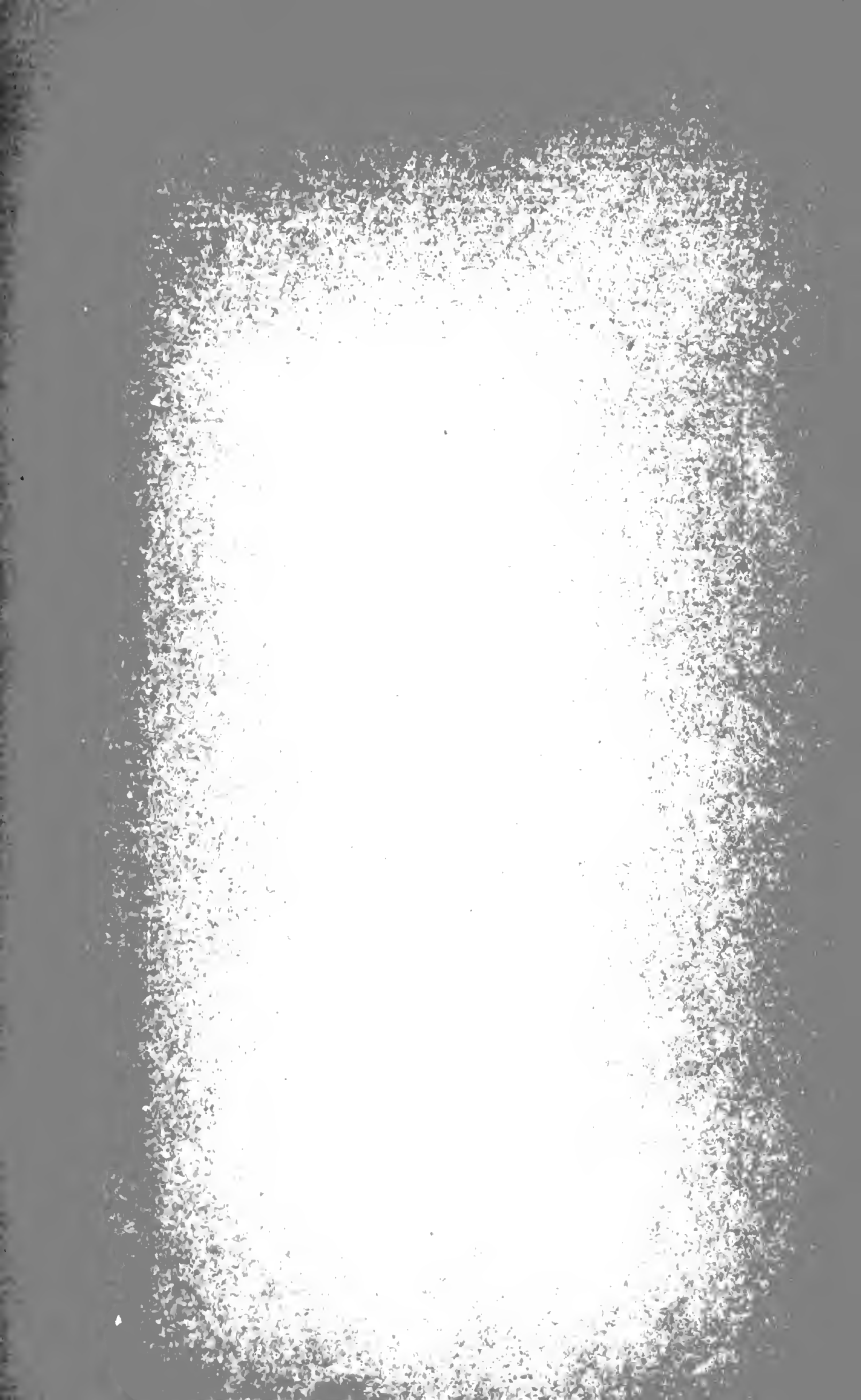
86129

*Class*









Mr. Savage's Books.

Religious Reconstruction.	12mo.			\$1.00
These Degenerate Days.	Small 16mo.	Flexible		.50
My Creed.	12mo			1.00
Poems.	16mo.	Full gilt.	With portrait	1.50
Light on the Cloud.	16mo.	Full gilt		1.25
Social Problems.	12mo			1.00
The Religious Life.	12mo			1.00
Belief in God.	12mo			1.00
Beliefs about Man.	12mo			1.00
Beliefs about the Bible.				1.00
The Modern Sphinx.	12mo.			1.00
The Morals of Evolution.	12mo			1.00
Talks about Jesus.	12mo			1.00
Man, Woman and Child.	12mo			1.00
Christianity the Science of Manhood.	12mo			1.00
The Religion of Evolution.	12mo			1.50
Life Questions.	16mo			1.00
Bluffton: A Story of To-day.	12mo			1.50
The Minister's Hand-book.		For Christenings, Weddings, and Funerals.	Cloth	.75
Sacred Songs for Public Worship.		A Hymn and Tune Book. Edited by M. J. Savage and Howard M. Dow.	Cloth	1.00
			Leather	1.50

Mr. Savage's weekly sermons are regularly printed in pamphlet form in "Unity Pulpit." Subscription price, for the season, \$1.50; single copies, 5 cents.

GEO. H. ELLIS, *Publisher.*

141 Franklin St., Boston, Mass.

# RELIGIOUS RECONSTRUCTION

BY

M. J. SAVAGE

V

---

"The thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns."

*Tennyson*

---



BOSTON

GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET

1888

BX9843  
S3

*Gift of  
Rev. Geo. W. Stone.*

COPYRIGHT

BY GEORGE H. ELLIS

1888

To my own self this book I dedicate,—  
That self that shineth o'er me as a star,  
Still lifting, guiding, luring from afar,—  
That self which, though all-glorious, is my mate;  
That, though as high above my poor estate  
As o'er the earth the brooding heavens are,  
Still whispers that this distance is no bar  
To him who climbs th' ideal to create!

To this, God in me, of me, my life-love,  
That has inspired all my nobler past,  
To this all that I am I owe alone!  
My blessed counterpart, it shines above;  
And since, as with God's hand, it holds me fast,  
It bids me know it shall be all my own!

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

## PREFACE

THIS book is an earnest attempt to answer earnest questions that have come to me from all over the land. These questions are "in the air," and are a product of the most serious life of the age. If they are flippantly asked by a few, they are devoutly and courageously asked by many more. Too many to be answered privately, they are also too much a matter of public concern to be hidden in a corner.

Believing, as I do, that religion is a permanent and the supreme interest of man, I also believe that "the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns." People wish to be religious, but it is becoming more and more true that they are not willing to pay so high a price as their brains for what passes current under the name of religion. Along with the growth of knowledge, then, concerning the universe, God and man, there must go a parallel readjustment of the thought-side of the religious life. And this means only that God is the God of truth as well as of devoutness. He, then, shows the deepest faith in God who fearlessly faces the truth, and lets it build the temple in which he will worship.





## CONTENTS

I. PRESENT CONDITIONS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT . . . . .	9
II. RELIGION AND THEOLOGY . . . . .	24
III. THE SCRIPTURES . . . . .	40
IV. COSMOLOGY AND THEOLOGY . . . . .	57
V. IDEAS OF GOD, OLD AND NEW . . . . .	72
VI. THE FALL OF MAN . . . . .	87
VII. REDEMPTION OR EDUCATION? . . . . .	103
VIII. JESUS . . . . .	120
IX. THE OLD CHURCH AND THE NEW . . . . .	136
X. THE END OF THE WORLD . . . . .	151
XI. THE DESTINY OF THE SOUL . . . . .	164
XII. IF YOU ARE RIGHT, HOW DOES IT HAPPEN THAT EVERY ONE DOES NOT AGREE WITH YOU? . . . . .	181
XIII. HERESY AND CONFORMITY . . . . .	197
XIV. THE DUTY OF LIBERALS . . . . .	215
XV. THE LOSS AND GAIN OF RELIGIOUS RECONSTRUCTION . . . . .	231





## Present Conditions of Religious Thought.

---

HOWEVER far I may find myself to-day from agreeing with the statements of faith that were made by the fathers, I am glad and proud to be able to trace my spiritual lineage to the old Congregational churches of New England. They were grand, consistent men who founded those churches. They were men possessed of positive convictions. They dared to think clear thoughts. They were men who believed from the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet. They were men who tried to live out their convictions, and to shape human life in accord with what they believed to be the will of God and the best interests of men. And if, sometimes, they were willing to persecute others in the interest of their own belief, they were also willing to endure hardships themselves for those same great faiths. They did both under the influence of that profound conviction which made them believe that they had no choice in the matter. This was God's truth as they understood it; and, like Martin Luther, and in that spirit which every man has who feels that he is the mouth-piece of the Eternal, they said: "Here I stand. God help me, I can no other."

Who were these men? They were the picked men of England. Many of them were men of wealth, occupying high social positions,—men who had proved that they were able to cope with and conquer the forces and conditions of this world and of the civilization of which they were a part.

But they were men who would not stand any intermediaries between themselves and God. They refused to bow their necks to any human authority. They refused to submit their judgments, their consciences, the direction of their minds and lives, to any man-made institutions, any man-made rituals, any man-made dogmas, as they understood those terms. They were the rationalists, in the best sense of that word, of their time. They studied carefully the basis for their belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures. They used their reason freely, fearlessly, earnestly, in coming to the conclusion that those words were the inspired oracles of God. And, when they had reached that conviction, they refused to have anything between them and the word of God. They would come to it with their own minds unbiassed, if they could,—with the earnestness of seekers after truth. They would take the truth first-hand, not diluted, not perverted, not twisted from its meaning by the interpretations of scholastics or under the bias of ecclesiastical institutions. They were, as I said, rationalists; and, when they had accepted the Bible as the word of God, they claimed the right to come to it, every man for himself, and in the light of the best scholarship of the time interpret its meaning. They claimed the right of free inquiry, freedom of research, the right of private judgment as to what God desired them to do. I claim, therefore, in no spirit of boasting, in no spirit of pretence, that I am doing to-day precisely the kind of work that they did in their time. They went out into the wilderness to found a new commonwealth of God, that they might be free to follow their convictions as to what was right. To-day, we, in their spirit, under the impulse of the same purpose, for the sake of reaching the same end which they had in view, go out into the wilderness of intellectual thought and life, that we may found a new com-

monwealth of God ; that we, like them, may listen for the spirit, unhindered by any authoritative interpretations of men.

As then the fathers put aside the Church that claimed to interpret the Bible for them, so we put aside the creeds that claim to interpret the same Bible. We put aside the very theory of the Bible which they held, for what we conceive to be adequate reason. We will not have any man-made institution or any man-made interpretation between our souls and the great Father of all.

Now, what did these men believe? They believed that this world was created at a definite point in time, that God lived outside the universe which he had made and of which he was the rightful dictator and governor. They believed that he created man in his own image, and placed him here upon the earth ; that man, in the exercise of his own free choice, rebelled against the rightful authority of heaven, and that, as the result of that, the whole human race lies under the wrath and curse of Almighty God ; that every soul is lost ; that every man, woman, and child on earth, that has ever been born, or is alive, or that is to be born, has been, is, or must be guilty of high treason against heaven, deserving no mercy at the hands of Infinite Justice, lying helpless at the feet of the Infinite Mercy, to be disposed of by the Infinite Wisdom as he chooses. The scheme of doctrine which they deduced from these Scriptures, which they had accepted as the direct and infallible revelation of God, they believed to be in every part a transcript of the divine mind. It was God's plan for saving so many of the souls of his children as he in his infinite wisdom decided were to be saved.

The whole scheme of doctrine that the fathers held sprang out of the supposed ruin of man ; and, from beginning to end, it was intended merely as a means of recovery. It was

God's way of saving the lost. They believed this rationally and intelligently. They believed it with their whole souls; and they tried to live in accordance with their belief. They tried to found here in New England a divine commonwealth, a theocracy, a government of God, in which there might be realized what to them were divine ideals of human life. I say they believed these things intelligently. There was no reason then, in the state of knowledge that prevailed at that time, why they should not hold these beliefs intelligently as rational, earnest, inquiring men. I suppose it is true—and we need to note this truth, because of the different use of language at the present time—that the men who rebelled against those beliefs were not generally clear-headed, intelligent, earnest thinkers, who were ahead of their age. Sometimes they were, it is true; but the infidel in early New England life was generally the kind of rebel that the pulpits pictured him. He rebelled not against what he did not believe to be divine truth; but he rebelled in the interests of his own will against what, perhaps, he would have confessed in his own heart was a government of God. The pulpit in those times got to using the word “infidel” in that sense, and has kept it up ever since; though the times are so changed that the man who is an infidel to-day is an entirely different person, intellectually, morally, and spiritually, from the one who first wore, and perhaps deserved, the epithet.

Such, then, was the belief of the Church from which our liberalism has sprung; but several things have happened since then that have changed the intellectual atmosphere of the world, that have made us live in another spiritual and theological climate, that have made us, in all literalness, the inhabitants of another kind of universe. Let me indicate a few of these great changes that have passed over the civilized world.



In the first place, there has been a revolution in physics, that passes under the general name of science,—the revolution in our thoughts about the universe, its age, its origin, and the method of its development. There has gone along with that, of necessity, a change in our conception of the nature of God, of the nature of his government of the universe, of the relation in which he stands to his creatures. It does not fall within the limits of my purpose, this morning, to outline very definitely what this great change is that has come about as the result of the growth of modern science; neither is it necessary for the purpose we have in hand. I wish this morning merely to note the fact, and the consequences that have resulted from it. It will be a part of my plan to go more into detail later in this series.

There has come, then,—and this is a fact that we need to bear in mind,—a revolution—nothing less than that—in our thought about the universe, that has carried with it, of necessity, a revolution in our thought about God,—of his relation to the universe, which is his garment, the expression of his life.

In the second place there has been a revolution in a narrower department of science,—that which passes under the general name of biology, the science of life. There has been a complete change in our conception of the origin and nature of man. We have found out that this old world of ours is indeed very old, not a new creation,—so old that all our methods of computing time seem vague and useless when we attempt to grasp the long reaches of the years. We have found out, also, that not only is this earth-home of man very old, but that the race itself is very old. We are no *parvenus* in the universe or on this planet. Instead of six thousand years, we must probably say sixty thousand, perhaps twice or thrice sixty thousand, years are the meas-

ure of the existence of man in his earth-home. We have changed completely our conception of the origin of man. We think of him no longer as placed here suddenly by the fiat of the Almighty Power, complete and perfect in body, mind, and soul, and as capable, therefore, of a free choice that might justly decide his eternal destiny. It is no part of my purpose to detail the changes, this morning, that have passed over the universe. I merely note the fact that the educated and free minds of Europe and America no longer hold the old theory concerning the origin, the nature, and the character of man. This, of course, must change our conception of his relation to God, our conception of sin and evil, and the causes that have brought them into existence.

A third change has come over the modern universe. There has been a revolution in criticism. There has arisen — what our fathers did not dream of the existence of — a science of historic criticism. We have studied the other religions of the world as well as Christianity, and have observed the origin of these religions. We have traced their natural methods of growth. We have seen that, instead of coming down out of heaven completely made and finished, they have been the slow and gradual growth of the human heart, the reaching up of humanity towards heaven. They have been no less divine, mark you, no less the work of the spirit of God, because slow in their progress and incomplete, because unfinished and the product of earth instead of being of direct descent from heaven. And the conviction has forced itself upon the great body of intelligent minds that what is true of the other religions of the world *may*, at least, be true of Christianity, even if we are not ready to say *must* be. This historical criticism has applied itself, also, to the study of the Scriptures. We have found not one infallible Bible, but many, each of them presenting claims to infal-

libility. We have studied the method by which sacred books have become sacred. We have seen how they have grown up as the natural product of the religious nature of man, which has surrounded them with reverence and lifted them up to a pedestal of sanctity, so that, in other religions as well as Christianity, men have come to stand in awe of the letter, and have feared to question it.

Again, as the result of the civilization of the world, there has come what may rightly be called a revolution in the human heart, a revolution in our human sense as to the justice and mercy and rightfulness of these old religious theories that have been pressed upon us as the work of God. This feeling in many hearts has been beautifully voiced by Whittier's "Eternal Goodness." I give two verses as illustrating what I mean by the change that is passing over the sentiment of the world :—

"I trace your lines of argument,  
Your logic linked and strong ;  
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,  
And fears a doubt as wrong.

"But still my human hands are weak  
To hold your iron creeds :  
Against the words ye bid me speak,  
My heart within me pleads."

In other words, the level of our human ideal of what is right and just has risen, so that we rebel against the old conception of God and of his dealing with men, and say: No matter for your proofs. It cannot be so. God cannot be as you have described him. He cannot so treat his children. It is not part of my purpose to-day to justify this feeling. I note it as a fact; and it is a fact which weighs with thousands who would not attempt to justify by logic the feeling that they still assert must be true.

These, then, are indications of the things that have happened since the days of our fathers.

I wish now to note a few results of these changes. I hold it no light thing for a man to disturb the settled religious convictions of his fellows. I have no word of sympathy for the flippancy that talks for the sake of talking or of tearing down old and sacredly held beliefs. Religious theories are sacred things. They have been baptized by the tears of thousands. They have been fused in the heat of human love and human aspiration. They have taken shape as the result of the best thought of some of the grandest men of the world. Touch them not carelessly or lightly, then; for not only are they religious convictions, but generally the moral motives of most men are inextricably entwined with their religious theories, so that, if you touch these, they feel drifted from their moral moorings and know not which way to go. But there is sometimes less danger in reconstruction than there is in leaving things as they are.

Who is responsible for these changes that have been going on? Mr. Spencer, Mr. Darwin, Mr. Huxley, Mr. Matthew Arnold, Mr. Lecky? These men? I mention these only as specimens of the representatives of modern theology and modern thought. These men have not created the facts. They have simply reported. They are not the causes of this condition of things. They are the symptoms, the outgrowth, the voices of it. The cause of this condition of things is a growing civilization under the impulse of the same God who has created all the past. If it be true that the world has been brought to its present condition according to the theory of evolution instead of by some other method, then certainly the man who has merely found it out is not responsible for it. The Eternal, of whom all truth is only a manifestation, he is responsible for the truth which



*Present Conditions of Religious Thought* 17

human eyes only see and which human hearts bow before. The time comes, then, when the only safety is in reconstruction,—in facing facts and recognizing things as they are. A man's storehouse that he has occupied may, in the process of years, become unsafe; but he says, I do not like to disturb it, as it will interfere seriously with my business. But, if he waits long enough, the time comes when not disturbing it interferes with his business a good deal more seriously than that disturbance which means reconstruction and putting things in a condition of safety. So the time comes, under the increasing new light, the dawning of wider day, when men must face the new facts, when they must reconstruct their theories in accordance with them, or there will be greater religious and moral suffering, disintegration, and decay than any amount of doubt could have produced.

What are, then, some of the things going on about us that intimate that these changes are in the air? I wish to note a few as specimens. First, the American Board stands for one. What is the attitude of the American Board? It represents the churches; and its late decision at Springfield means, simply, that the majority of the churches still hold the old theory of the universe, still hold that conception of God, still hold the old ideas of the condition and destiny of man. That is all. The majority vote came to its natural result in their councils; and I have no sort of sympathy with the outcry made against the majority in the American Board. I have no sympathy with the flippancy of the daily press in its criticisms of the action of the American Board or with the editorials that have been written in criticism of it. The American Board simply stood by its flag, stood by its convictions. It believes that the men in China and Japan and India, who are not converted to particular theological beliefs by particular methods, are lost. As honest men, what should

they do, then, but stand by their guns? Prof. Park said, two or three years ago, that this new dogma as to a second probation for those who had not a chance to hear the gospel in this world would "cut the nerve of missions"; and he was wise and far-seeing in his statement. What was the result? There was a deficiency, last year, of something like \$200,000 in their receipts. If men believe that the heathen are to be lost unless saved by their scheme and plan of salvation, then farmers and hard-working men and women all over the land may well pinch and save their dollars, and even their pennies, that, if they cannot send a man, they may at least send a tract, to tell them of their danger. But the moment you make them believe that the danger is not quite so imminent, that it is even possible that the heathen may have another opportunity, then why should they pinch and save? Why should they put themselves to inconvenience? Why should they neglect friends, families, neighbors? Why should they take money which is needed at their doors, for the sake of carrying on the general work of civilization which will come by natural processes in its own time? If all that the missionary work means, as is intimated by a good many of the criticisms, is bringing the nations of heathendom to our system of education and our civilized ideas, why should they do anything special for them? Commerce will take care of that. The general intercommunication of ideas that is going on so rapidly will take care of that, if that is all. There is, then, no need of the American Board; and those who are anxious to have the American Board give up those old ideas are simply advising it to commit suicide. You will not misunderstand me. You know how glad I am of the change that is going on. I am only talking in the interest of consistency. As an indication of how rapid the change is, it is almost amusing—or it would be,

if the subject were not so serious—to know that there are not more than one or two orthodox Congregational ministers in Boston to-day who could be appointed to preach the gospel to the heathen. They will do very well to preach in Boston; but it would not be safe to trust them in other lands.

As another indication, I need only speak the word Andover. There is no sort of question that the creed which the Andover professors are obliged to sign every five years was framed with the express intent to prevent the precise thing that is going on. It was born in the days of the old Trinitarian controversy, and was founded as a bulwark against modern thought, a defence and fortress against Unitarianism. What right, then, have any set of men to divert a trust fund like that into the teaching of the very things it was arranged to prevent? I have all sympathy with the professors at Andover. I love some of them as personal friends. I have no intellectual respect for their position. They signed a creed that they do not believe, and that they tell you they do not believe; and they claim the right in some way to divert the purpose of the money which was used in its foundation to teaching that which the founder himself detested with his whole soul. It seems to me that the only honest thing is to do one of two things,—either apply to the legal authorities of the Commonwealth to change the conditions of the trust, or else walk manfully out of the front door of the institution, and leave it to itself. I see not how honest, clear-headed men can help doing one or the other. But the change that I speak of has been going on, as you see, until it has infected these teachers, so that every man at Andover to-day is a heretic, in the light of the teaching of the fathers and the founders of that institution.

Another indication of the change that is going on. You find in almost all the great churches of this country that



there has been an insensible change passing over the minds of the men that sit in the pews. They do not like to hear any longer the old doctrines preached; and this feeling has become so influential that the ministers in the pulpits are largely silent concerning them. Dr. Parker, of England, told us the other day, at Tremont Temple, that there was very little preaching of the old doctrines in London now; and yet, if those doctrines are true, there is nothing that ought to be preached so much, so often, with such intense and awful earnestness. If they be not true, then it is a pretence and a sham to have them in the creeds and to swear that you believe them. Not only are there many of these men that are so influenced, but you will find the great majority in many of the churches do not like the old statements of theological doctrine; and, if they were preached consistently, they would leave the churches, and get beyond the possibility of hearing them.

Then there is another body of men, who have gone out of the churches, who are no longer within the range of their influence, who have been taught that religion and the popular theology were practically the same thing; and, having become convinced that the popular theology is superstition, they think religion is superstition, and they have given up being religious. They think there is no reason why an educated, earnest man should pay attention to religion. They are beyond the reach of its influence. They need, if religion be still a matter of importance, to be taught the new conception of the religious life, and that there is still basis in the nature of things for being religious, and deeply religious.

Then there is another class,—a class that I come in contact with almost every day,—men who, whether they attend the old churches or not, have, in some indefinable sort of

way, come to feel that the old ideas no longer hold them with any earnest grip. If they say they believe them, they cannot tell why or define them. But they still go on, with father or mother or friend, or from habit, to the old churches, because they say: Suppose I give this up, which way shall I go? What is there to take the place of them? It seems to them like giving up everything, and going out-of-doors into an unsheltered religious life. They have a conviction that they get perhaps a little benefit, that there is something good in being religious and connected, even in the loosest way, with a church; and they do not like to surrender it. They will not go out until they have somewhere to go; and they need light and guidance.

These are indications of some of the conditions of religious thought that seem to me to demand earnest and patient work in the way of religious reconstruction.

We need to consider that one of two things is true. There is no such thing as the world's being "sort of" lost, "kind of" lost, almost lost, partly lost. One of two things is true; and we need, and the modern world needs, to face it. Half-way Unitarians need to face it. So-called liberal orthodox people need to face it. And it is because of my conviction of this great truth that I have taken the position that I have in reference to the American Board and to Andover. Either this world is lost and under the curse and wrath of God or it is not. One of the two is true. Either every man, woman, and child in it is doomed, and justly doomed, to endless misery, or they are not. They are not half-way doomed to endless misery, partly doomed, partly under God's wrath, partly lost, half one thing and half the other. Either this theory is true or it is not true. If it is true, and if these men to whom I have referred believe it is true, then they are consistent, honest, earnest

men ; and I honor them. But, if it be not true, then the whole scheme of doctrine which constitutes the plan of salvation is something we no longer need. There is no one of the old doctrines of Orthodoxy that is not part of the plan for delivering man from the ruin that came upon him from the fall. Now, if there has been no fall, if man is not thus ruined, if God does not look on him this way and is not going to treat him in this fashion, then there is no reason why this doctrine should be still insisted on as necessary, nor that it should be indefinitely and half-way held. There is no necessity for it, unless the human race is fallen and ruined.

What we need to do to-day is to turn square round and accept the other alternative, if we do not accept this. If this is a race that has been developing for thousands of years, beginning on the borders of the animal world and climbing slowly up to our present position ; if, under the providence of God, we are going on in the process of education and development,—that is one thing. If we believe it, let us give our money, our thought, our means, the lavish outpouring of our efforts, to the accomplishment of the kind of work that is needed. Only consider the loss of time, of money, of love, of effort, poured out into what are practically useless channels, provided that be not the condition of the human race. If all the ingenuity, all the thought, the money, and the work could be directed to facing the real facts of the condition of man and helping him upward in the pathway of progress towards the real God, who has led him to the present hour, think of the gain, the immense advance, that might be made ! Now, these men of the olden time believed that they had a theory which matched the facts. They did their best in the light of their age. They created theories of man and of his destiny. They

thought that this great scheme was the counterpart of the reality. They fought for it, worked for it; and they were grand in their earnestness and sincerity.

Let us see what I believe to be the one necessity of the modern world,—the need of having a working theory of life as real to us as theirs was to them. Let us have a living thought of God, a living thought of his universe, a living thought of the nature of man, his needs, and his destiny. Let us have something that shall satisfy the brain, so that we can respect ourselves intellectually; that shall be motive for the heart, that we may feel there is something worth living for. Let us face the real facts of the universe consistently, earnestly, flinging away the old ideas, if we do not hold them any more. Let us front the new universe, and catch the first rays of God's new sunrise. Let us take hold of the work we are called upon to do to-day, and not content ourselves with criticising the fathers, while willing to be not half so grand, so consistent, so manly, so true as they.

## RELIGION AND THEOLOGY.

---

"I LOVE flowers, but I hate botany; I love religion, but I hate theology." These are not my words: I am quoting them. I quote, indeed, from memory; but, whether they are verbally accurate or not, I am quite sure of the accuracy of the thought. They are words which are reported to have been uttered here by a popular evangelist within a year, and they undoubtedly express a very wide-spread popular feeling. And yet there is the most delicious absurdity underlying them. As though there could be the fair outline, the dainty tinting, the sweet fragrance, of the violet or the rose, except for the underlying plan, the fibrous framework, that supports it and enables it to be!

The other night, in Tremont Temple, the Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D., of London, spoke very earnestly against scientific theologians, going so far as to say,—what I think he himself would admit to be a little exaggeration,—that they had been guilty of more injury to religion than all the infidels. As though there could be rational religion—religion that could appeal to men's brains, that they could hold with personal self-respect—without careful, systematic, underlying thought! Every little while, you will hear persons, particularly among the attendants at the old churches, expressing their rejoicing over the fact that their minister does not any longer preach theology. They will tell you that he gives them only practical, every-day sermons, sermons intended to

help in daily life. As though a sermon could be practical and could be of any value as a help to any one, unless underlying it there was a theory of life, unless it told which way to go and what to do, and unless it contained a reason as to why! And they will add sometimes, as an explanation, showing really what they are thinking, that their minister does, indeed, once in a while,—once a year, perhaps,—bring out his old theology and give a theological sermon; and then he will put it away again for another year. If, indeed, this be true, it is an insult both to the minister's brain and to his honesty. I speak of this, however, as indicating a popular type of thought, or what passes for thought, at the present time. It is a popular type of feeling, rather let me say.

Now, let us face this matter for a few moments, and really see just what we mean. It requires only a little thought to convince us that theory underlies everything. Theory underlies practice in every department of human life. When people are talking about religion and theology, what do they mean precisely? If you press them a little closely, I suppose that they would concede it is something like this: religion covers, to their minds, the practical, every-day goodness of human life. It is the way people feel; it is the way they treat their neighbors; it is the way they conduct their business; it is a question of honesty, of purity, of truth, of integrity; it is, in a general way, a question of goodness. Theology, these people think, is only theorizing,—something that is in the air, that may very well be separated from this practical goodness. But, underlying all practical goodness that passes under the name of religion, everywhere and always, is theology; for theology is nothing more nor less than the theory of religion, the theory of goodness, the theory of feeling and conduct that we cherish and practise.

Theory, then, as I have said, underlies everything, as any man who has ever given two thoughts to it in his life will see. From the time he rises in the morning until he goes to sleep at night,—in his business; in his store, if he is a merchant; in his lawyer's office, if he is a lawyer; in his work as a mechanic, if he is a mechanic; in his day labor, if he is to be a day laborer,—wherever he may be and whatever engaged in, he is working on a theory, a theory as to how this particular thing can best be performed, though he may never have waked up to think of it as a theory. He may never have asked himself a question about it in his life. He may have inherited it, or borrowed it, or have come into possession of it in some unconscious way; but every step he takes, every word he speaks, every action he does, implies an underlying theory of life. Not only that, but the amount of success which he attains depends always, other things being equal, upon the general accuracy of his theory. If he succeeds without thinking anything about it, it is because he has stumbled, or blundered, into the possession of a theory sufficiently accurate to lead him to success. All the failure in the world comes from the single fact that men misconceive the actual realities of the universe about them, have false theories about them, and this leads them into false methods and ways of conduct. Take the farmer as an illustration. He may never have thought much about the matter of soil, of enriching it, or as to what crops he ought to plant in particular fields, or of the general methods of his work; but even the stupidest farmer in all New England is working every year upon somebody's theory as to how the work on a farm ought to be carried on. Perhaps he has picked it up from his father where he left it, and has never attempted to improve it; but he is working out somebody's theory, and the measure



of his success depends on the measure of the accuracy of the theory on which he is working, consciously or unconsciously. But, if he is ever to make any improvement in his farm, it will be done, in the first instance, by thought and study that will enable him to form a better theory as to how his work ought to be carried on.

Let me give you one more illustration. We have been considerably exercised in Boston lately over the success of the famous yacht that has been designed and planned by a Boston man. We are proud of the fact that to-day we stand as champions of the world in this particular. But, if you will give it a little careful thought, you will arrive at the conclusion that it was not the hurraing and waving of handkerchiefs and hats of the crowd on the day of the race that won it: it was not anything that occurred on that day which determined where the victory should lie. It was careful, patient, persistent study and thought in the quiet office of Mr. Burgess that won the race. It was theory, one theory beating another, a theory incarnated. It was because this particular yacht was built more perfectly in accordance with the eternal laws of God, as embodied in wave and wind; and it was the man who studied these with the most accuracy and embodied them in the most perfect theory that won the race. When the theory was devised, the race was won; and that which occurred on a particular day in New York Harbor was only the carrying out of that which was pre-determined in the nature of things.

Take, again, the case of the late war between France and Germany. It was not because the German soldiers, man for man, had more enthusiasm, bravery, daring, that they won the victory. It was because the grandest military theorist of the age fought out the campaign from beginning to end, thought out the methods of carrying on the warfare, the the-

ories pertaining even to the kind of step which the soldier should take on his march, as well as the very implements — gun and cannon — that should be used in the campaign. It was Von Moltke, before a drum had been beaten, that humiliated France.

Suppose you have a sick child in the house, and call a physician, and say to him: "Doctor, I don't care anything about your theory, or anything about your studies. All I want is that you should cure my child." If the doctor is a wise man, he would say: "My dear sir" or "madam, it is my theory concerning the structure of the body, it is my theory concerning the nature of the disease, it is my theory as to the power of the elements and combinations that make up my medicines, and as to the way they work particular results, that makes me a physician, that enables me to act wisely, and that determines beforehand, before I have administered one single dose of medicine, whether I shall be able to heal or not."

Theology is not quite so unpractical a thing as the popular feeling of this age declares it to be. Consider for a moment the part that clear-cut, earnest, religious thought has played in the great epochs of the world. What was it that made Mr. Wesley's mighty power in England a hundred years ago? What was it that created that great upheaval or revival of religious feeling that swept over the kingdom? What was it that created that great movement which crossed the Atlantic, and has made one of the grandest popular churches of America to-day? It was nothing more nor less than the new thought of John Wesley. It started in his brain,—a new thought about God, a new thought about men, a new thought about the organization and function and work of the Church. It was this that kindled this new life, and produced all the magnificent results. It was the thought

of Wyclif that so disturbed Rome, and made him the dangerous man he was to the Middle Age conception, that made him the morning star of the English Reformation. It was the new thought of John Huss that turned him into so dangerous an enemy of the old ideas that he had to be burned at the stake. It was the new thought of Savonarola that revolutionized Florence. It was the new thought of Servetus that made him so dangerous to Calvin that at any price he must be got out of the way. It was the new thought of Calvin himself that made him a dictator, and the dominant force that he has been for hundreds of years. It was the new thought of Martin Luther about the Bible and the method of salvation, as to the relation which God maintains towards his world, which kindled the fire of enthusiasm which swept over half Europe, and burned up so many of the old superstitions, and prepared new fields for the growth of human civilization. It was the new thought of Jesus out of which Christianity itself was born. Jesus was no such man as these people who inveigh against creeds and against theology, and say all that we want is practical religion, have supposed him to be. It was the new thought of Jesus, expressed and implied in every throbbing word, that made him a leader of the new religious civilization. And it was the new thought that is connected with the name of Moses that created the religious grandeur and determined the career of Israel for four thousand years, and made them the guides of the world out of the wilderness of polytheism into the conception of the unity of the universe as ruled by one great power.

Where was, later, the central idea of Channing and his work? What differentiated him from the older movements of religious life in New England? Out of what was our Unitarianism born? Out of a new and grander thought of

God and man. And, when Theodore Parker came, that which made him a leader of his time was that his thought had gone on far beyond that which had become too conservative to receive or reflect anything better in the way of religious life. Why does Unitarianism exist to-day? What is the meaning of the grand liberal movement in the religious life of the modern world? It means only that we claim to have a better theology. That is the root and meaning of it all. We have new light on these great problems of human life. We have gained a clearer conception of God, we claim. We are nearer the truth in our theories about human nature, we claim. We are nearer to the truth concerning the methods by which men are to be brought into better relationship to God, we claim. If we do not believe that these claims are well founded, then we have no right to exist, because we are dividing the forces of Christendom. If we do believe that these claims are well founded, if we do believe that we have more light and higher, broader, deeper, better thought, then it is our duty to stand by this thought, to teach it, to help lift the light which has been intrusted to us, in order that men may know the way. That is what all light is for,—to teach people the way. Knowing the way is of no account, unless people are willing to walk in it, of course; but, on the other hand, being willing to walk is of no account, unless men know the way. The two must go together: the knowledge, the theory, the theology, must precede the taking of the very first step of practical activity.

Here, then, is this feeling in regard to theology, this aversion, this liking for what is called practical religion,—as though the two could be opposed to each other. From what has this feeling sprung? When you find a wide-spread feeling on the part of the people, it is not to be treated

lightly or as of no account. It means something; it has sprung out of something. What has this sprung out of?

In the first place, some small part of it has to be accounted for by the impatience of certain people at being troubled with anything like clear and consecutive thought. There is always a part of the community to whom it is a pain to think. They do not care to be disturbed in this way. They would rather drift or go with the crowd, and be floated on by the strongest current. But I do not think that this is a very wide-spread reason; for I believe that the number of persons who are unwilling to think is less than ever before. Certainly, I do not believe there is much of this feeling on the part of those who come to hear me speak; for I note the fact with joy, and as complimentary to you, that always, since I have been in this city, when I have asked the hardest things of you in the way of thinking, I have received the grandest and most enthusiastic response.

There is another thing. Thousands of people have come to feel that theological discussion is valueless, that it amounts to nothing, that it leads nowhere, that it does not settle problems that are in debate, and that therefore it is not worth while. Now, we need to use just a little clear thought here, and draw a line of distinction. When two people sit down and dispute, to show the intellectual training which they possess, to prove what intellectual athletes they are, simply to show what they can do; when their object is not to find the truth, but to beat their opponent,—then discussion of that sort, instead of leading to high thinking, is useless and worse than useless, because it frequently degenerates, and leads to bad blood, dissension, and enmity. But when two people come together to talk concerning any great problem of importance that may be in debate, and when **both of them** are animated by an earnest desire to find the

truth, then there is nothing so profitable as discussion and debate. It is just this discussion, this debate, this comparing of views, this weighing of evidence on this side and that, that has settled every question that has ever been debated from the foundation of the world. If we are earnest in desiring to settle these great problems, then debate in this spirit—not of winning the victory, but of finding the truth—is of the utmost importance.

But the principal reason, as I am convinced, why this feeling exists is a misconception of what is meant by theology. It is not theology which people dislike so much. It is the particular kind of theology that they have been accustomed to hear described under that name. This means, really, that the people are tired of the old theology, and wish to be rid of it. That is the common, the principal explanation of all this wide-spread feeling. Suppose I should attempt to preach to you to-day one of the sermons of Jonathan Edwards, who confessedly was one of the mightiest preachers the world has ever produced. If you listened at all, it would be with a dull indifference, or else with indignant protest against the views there presented. People, even in the most orthodox churches, would not bear the preaching of Jonathan Edwards to-day. Why? They will say, because they do not like theological preaching. What they really mean is that they do not like the theology of Jonathan Edwards. They have outgrown and left it behind. It is no longer real: it is not alive to-day. But go back to that old church in Northampton, and to the time of Jonathan Edwards, and see how people listened then. It was the same kind of human nature in the people that sat in those pews, who believed with their whole heart and soul the theology of the universe that Jonathan Edwards held, and which made his sermons all on fire. Men listened while

the tears ran down their faces, and they clutched the pews in front of them, as if to save them from sinking into the perdition that he opened under their feet ; and women, in hysterics, fell to the floor ; while excitement, such as is almost unknown in the modern churches, was produced by those sermons that seem to you now so dead. They were alive enough then ; and it is not because they were theological that you do not like them to-day. It is because the theology of Edwards's time is not alive to-day. Those theological sermons were most intensely practical at the time. They moulded the thought, they kindled the emotions, they determined the practice, of those who breathlessly heard.

Study any religion that you will,—Christianity or any other,—or study the belief of any particular religious denomination, and you will find this to be universally true : that it is the theory, the underlying theology, which determines what it shall be. What is the difference between Buddhism and Christianity ? It is not a difference of feeling, it is not a difference, chiefly, of practical living. There is something behind the practical living, something behind the feeling,—something which determines the feeling, which moulds the practice. What is that ? The theology always : you cannot escape it. Sakya had a certain theory of the worlds, of the origin of evil, of human suffering, of the gods, of their relation to men, of their ability or their willingness to help them ; a certain theory as to his own origin, his own mission, what he was in the world for, what he might accomplish. And Buddhism, in all its infinite ramifications, is nothing more nor less than the out-blossoming of this theory, this theology of Sakya. The theory determines whether people will have a lofty or degraded feeling about God. You will find, it is said, certain tribes in some parts of the world which never sacrifice to their deities. They only bring

flowers, and lay them as an offering on the altar. They have a theory, a theology, of God, a thought about him, that makes them feel that he does not need to be placated, that he does not care for blood and groans and the death of his victims, and that he is to be worshipped by bringing offerings of fragrance and beauty. It is their theology that makes them worship in that way.

If you could have visited Mexico in the times of Pizarro, and seen the hundreds of human victims slaughtered during those cruel years, and had asked why this sacrifice of life, you would have found, as you examined it, that these priests and the people of Mexico had a theory of God, a theology, of which this was the natural and necessary expression. They believed that their God, the God who sat in the heavens and controlled their destiny, wished from them this kind of sacrifice ; and they dared not neglect its performance.

But are there no evils connected with theorizing, with theology? With certain kinds of theorizing and certain types of theology there are evils many and great. I wish to note some of them.

The principal evil, to my mind, connected with the theology that needs reconstruction to-day is the conviction, which has been held in connection with almost all the religions of the past, that their theories are absolutely and finally true, that they are inspired in such a sense as to be infallible, that it is wicked to question or change or even talk about improving them. This is the principal evil, as I conceive it, connected with the theology of the past which needs to be done away. Think for a moment what some of the evils are that connect themselves with this idea of infallibility.

In the first place, the result that meets us at the very threshold is the stagnation of religious thought. In the sphere of religion, no matter what may be true anywhere



else, men have done thinking. There is no chance for improvement. There is no question of a change. Here is the infallible revelation of God in its final form; and woe be to any man who dares to touch or question it! Yet the human mind in every other department goes on, asks questions, receives new answers, broadens and deepens, gaining ever a deeper view of the universe, while the popular theology belongs to two or three thousand years ago. It is the religion of a Ptolemaic instead of a Copernican universe; and it has stayed where it was because of this theory of the infallibility connected with it.

The next evil is that it turns men who would else be loving, tender, and helpful, into bigots, and imbitters their hearts against their fellow-men; and no wonder. Suppose that you and I believed that we had a theory, the acceptance of which in its unchanged completeness was absolutely essential to the salvation of the world, and that any man, woman, or child who did not accept it was doomed to eternal torment. It would be our grandest duty to prevent any one questioning, touching, or changing it, so far as lay within our power. We inveigh against the horrors of the Inquisition, the atrocities of St. Bartholomew's Day; but what were they compared with the eternal torment of millions and millions and millions of souls who might be ruined by those heretics, no matter how honest, that the Inquisition and St. Bartholomew's Day dealt with? It would be mercy to wipe off the planet the inhabitants of a continent, even though they were tortured a thousand years in the process, rather than that they should be the means of eternal torment to the inhabitants of two continents through many generations. It is the theory of infallibility, then, that was responsible for St. Bartholomew and for the Inquisition.

Another evil. It divides humanity into factions and

schools. It splits up into warring divisions the grand army of humanity that ought to be marching sympathetically side by side in one united force against the opposition of evil. If a man thinks that I am wrong, and wrong in such a way that I am pernicious to my fellow-men, he cannot work with me. If I think another man is as honest as I am, I may hold to my conviction that my theory is right; but so long as I do not believe that it is infallible, but am willing to admit that I may make a mistake, I can join hands with him in practical work and in the search for truth. So there can be this practical sympathy and union in spite of theoretical differences.

Then there is one more evil, one connected with the first that I mentioned; and that is that it chains the religious world to barbaric ideals of God, of worship, of religious service, and of religious life. The theory of infallibility has for a thousand years consecrated barbarism as divinity. It has taken the thought of the wild and cruel men of old, of the cave-men, of the cannibal, for the popular conception of God as connected with his treatment of the human race. It has adopted the cave-man's and the cannibal's theory of divinity. It is the way they would treat their enemies, therefore that is the way their god is going to treat his. It takes this theory of the past, and makes it infallible. Men are afraid to question it; and so you find whole masses of men to-day with their faces towards the past, and clinging to the hideous idols of the old world's barbarism. This prevents religious growth, religious civilization. It prevents clarifying and making grand our theory, our image of God that we must worship.

Then there is another evil connected with this old theology, and with any theology, for that matter; and that is an evil which is very common,—the placing the means, the

methods, of helping men above the welfare of the men themselves. You will find people fighting over their theories, their theological doctrines, to the neglect of the men that the theories ought to be serving.

Suppose there was a life-saving service at a certain point on the coast, and another three miles away, and that they were furnished with different appliances, that they were engaged in different methods of carrying on their work,—methods which the government was testing, to find out which was of more efficacy. Suppose the two start for a wreck, and the two crews are so set, so earnest, in the belief each that its own way is the best, that they fall to fighting on their way, while the wrecked men sink and drown. No method, no appliance, only a loving heart and a ready hand are better than all their appliances; and yet that is nothing against the appliances. The appliances multiply their power fifty-fold: only they should be used not for their own sake, but for the sake of helping men. So it is nothing against theology that doctors of divinity fall foul of each other, and leave men to perish, while they battle over their own peculiar ideas. That is only something against the wisdom of the theologians, nothing against the value of clear thought as to the method by which men are to be saved.

Now, a question arises, which we must face. Is it possible for us to have a clear and accurate theory of the universe, a theology so perfect that it will supersede all others? Perhaps not yet. A perfect theory, a perfect theology, I take it, is to be found only in the mind of the Infinite himself. But something of great importance is possible for us. It is possible for us to find something of the truth. It is possible for us to have a working theory of life that shall be a guide and help to us. And it is possible, as comparing one theory with another, for unbiassed and honest men to determine as to which of them is the more likely to be true. It is not possi-

ble that there should be the same amount of evidence for two contradictory theories; and, if men are more anxious for the truth than to support a special theory, it will be easy to decide on which side the evidence lies between different theories in any department of life, theology as elsewhere. And that theory is to be accepted which has the most proof. That is the only sane method for any sane man to follow. If there are, therefore, two theories, one of which has a good deal of proof and the other has none, then the one that has a good deal of proof, the one that has the most probability in its favor, is the one to adopt. Take that, and hold it till it be proved to be untrue.

But we need here to say a word concerning the duty of the conservative and of the radical mind. I wish to defend the conservative and to attack it, to defend the radical and to attack it, all in a breath. The duty of both should be simply to find God's truth. A man has no right to cling to a thing just because he has become accustomed to it and learned to love it. And the man who has found something new has no right to go to the man who is clinging to the old, and tear it away and force his new thought upon him, because he happens to like the new better than the old. The duty of both should be a reverent search for the truth. Test the old, but test also the new. Challenge any new thought, and do not admit it as right into the ranks of established conviction till it has proved its case. But give it an opportunity to prove it. Treat it not as an enemy, but as though it might be a friend. Treat it as though it might be a messenger from above, with new light for the guidance of men. Hold to that which has been proved to be good in the past. Remember that this is an infinite universe, that nobody has fathomed it as yet, and that it is absurd for us to suppose that there are no improvements to be made in our religious thinking, feeling, and conduct. Remember that the very dearest

of all our hopes is that we are to make progress day by day, coming ever nearer and nearer to God, nearer and nearer to the high and complete ideal of humanity and life. And this can only come through clearer thinking, through nobler feeling, and through more earnest action. Conservatism and radicalism, then, instead of fighting each other, should join hands, and fight for the discovery of God's truth.

One more thought concerning the relation of theory to practice. Remember that it is clear-headed theological thinking that has laid out the new roadway for human progress through the wilderness, that has built all the road, that has constructed and laid every rail of the track; that it is clear-thoughted theory that has invented and built the engine and every car in the train; that it is clear-headed theorizing that takes charge of the engine as engineer, one who knows the theory of the road and of the train and how it is to be run. It is theology which is the head-light on the locomotive that shines out in the darkness, reveals the track, tells when there is any obstruction in the way, and when it is open and safe to follow. But all this were not enough, even though the theology were perfect; for it does not create the religious life. There must be emotion, the steam in the boiler, the heart of fire, the enthusiasm of humanity, the love for God, the desire to help our fellow-men. There must be all this,—the steam power, the propulsive force,—or else the theory is worse than nothing. If you have the grandest love for humanity in your heart, if you have this religious force mighty as a whirlwind, yet if the roadway be not made safe at every point, if the engine be not built according to the eternal laws of God, then all your propulsive power simply means wreck and ruin. You need theology, clear thought, and knowledge of the way first, then the power to move men along that way into ever better and better fields of thought and human endeavor.

## THE SCRIPTURES.

---

THE whole system of belief which constitutes the popular theology of the churches to-day springs out of a certain theory concerning the Scriptures and a certain method of their interpretation. The next step, then, for us to take, in the work of religious reconstruction, is to consider these Scriptures in the light of modern knowledge, and determine for ourselves whether the theory concerning them is justified and whether the scheme of theology which has been derived from them has a basis in the reality of things.

Before proceeding to do that, however, I wish to say a word concerning the men and the times that gave birth to our popular system of theology. However we may differ from them to-day, we ought at any rate to estimate them correctly, to understand the grandeur of their character and the earnest, noble aim which animated them.

There are two ways by which we may estimate any work that has been achieved. We may consider it in relation to its ability to meet the ends to-day for which it has been constructed, or we may consider it in the light of the time that gave it birth.

To illustrate what I mean. The steam-engine of Watt and Stephenson would be a very poor contrivance to meet the wants of the nineteenth century; but yet we rightly honor these men for what they did, even lifting them to a loftier pedestal of fame than we accord to their successors

## *The Scriptures*



who have carried on the work which they invented to its present degree of perfection. So the men whose earnest brain and flaming hearts and noble aspirations wrought this theology, though we may differ from them now, are worthy of honor. They were, indeed, the rationalists of their time. They had got out of what they regarded, and what we regard, as a lower type of religious life. They stood then for the most radical reform. They took the next step which led the human race to where we are at the present time. They believed that they were dealing with the actual facts of God's universe, and of human nature. They believed that they touched realities, and that they were moulding and shaping human life into accordance with the divine and eternal truth of things. And it was easy enough for them to hold those opinions then. We declare to-day that those views are irrational, that there is no reason for their existence, that they do not accord with the facts, that they are antiquated in the light of present knowledge. But, in estimating the men and their work, we need to remember how very modern our knowledge is, how recently we have come into possession of what we regard as a more nearly accurate theory of the universe, how recently we have learned to look at God as we do to-day, how recent is all this new thought, this flood of light in which we gain a new conception of human nature. The popular theory of the universe to-day, the Copernican theory, the one that we believe to be substantially accurate, was not accepted by the majority of even learned men until so modern a time as may be indicated by the date of the foundation of our own city. Only two or three hundred years ago did men begin to live in what is our modern world; and conceptions of God, of man, of God's dealings with man, which we lightly regard as unreasonable to-day, may have looked to those men as the perfection of divine

reason. Greece had taken a few faltering steps towards the development of a scientific conception of the world ; but, when Christianity was born out of the brain and heart of Judaism, it brought with it, as an inheritance, which was unquestioningly accepted, the old Scriptures, as being an inspired transcript of the divine mind. And these Scriptures taught a theory of the world, of its origin, of its construction, which the Church unquestioningly accepted, as they believed on the divine authority itself. It followed, then, as a logical necessity, that whatever steps science had already taken became useless. They felt, concerning this outer knowledge, very much as the old Mohammedan caliph did concerning the wisdom stored up in the library at Alexandria, when he was giving his order to have it burned. It is reported that he said : If the teachings of these books agree with the Koran, then we do not need them. If they do not accord with the Koran, then they are pernicious and wrong, and ought to be destroyed. So the early Church felt that, if scientific speculation agreed with the Bible, they did not need it ; for they had the Bible already. If it differed from the Bible, it must of necessity be wrong. And this they decided in the light of the best reason that they had at the time, for they accepted the Bible as the infallible word of God ; and this was, therefore, a perfectly rational thing for them to do and say. We need to remember these things, in order that we may hold these great fathers of the Church, these early leaders of theology, in something like a true estimation. If we are as faithful to the light of our time, as earnest, as devoted as they, then we need not blush in their presence and they need not blush in ours.

With so much of preliminary concerning these men, the times in which they worked, and the results which they achieved, we will turn to the Scriptures, which, as I have



said, are the warrant which is offered us for the truth of the teachings which constituted the popular system of theology. Those doctrines spring out of a certain theory of the Scriptures, and a certain method of interpretation.

But, before we begin this discussion, let me say one earnest word. Let no man who hears me dare to say that I utter one single syllable against the Bible. I am seeking, as all men ought to seek, the simple truth concerning the Bible. I criticise the theory, I discuss the method, what men have said about the Bible, what men have claimed concerning the system of truth which they have deduced from the Bible. These are the themes of my discussion; and I cannot understand how any man in the older churches or the new should desire anything except the simple truth. Why should a man desire to be deceived concerning this marvellous universe? Why should a man desire to cling to opinions concerning his own nature which are false? Why should a man wish to hold inaccurate views concerning the relation in which he stands to God? Why should a man be willing to be travelling the wrong road instead of desiring to find the right one? I say frankly, I consider it my first duty to hold my mind as free and open as I am able to, unbiassed, desiring only the truth. If a man proved me wrong, I would thank him as one God-sent to lead me into a better way. In this spirit, all of us ought to consider these great problems concerning human nature and human destiny.

A theory of the Scriptures, a method of interpreting them, — these are the bases of the popular theology. First, I shall speak of the method of interpreting the Bible. It is treated as one book from beginning to end; and, on that theory, the method of interpretation seems to me unimpeachably correct. Two principles I need to notice. In trying to find out what the Bible teaches, very naturally the slightest

hint, the faintest voice of utterance, counts as against no matter how impressive and prolonged a silence.

Suppose there is a whole book, suppose there are a dozen books, in the Bible, that have nothing whatever to say concerning any one of the great doctrines of theology; and suppose there is half a line in some one of the books that gives some clear and explicit statement concerning one of these doctrines. Of course the silence counts for nothing. It is the faint voice or the distinct and definite utterance that shall be heard. For as Prof. Stuart, of Andover, one of the giants of modern theology, used to say, "One text is as good as a hundred." If you feel sure that God has said something definitely, though it be only half a line, the fact that he has not said it through whole tracts of the Bible is not to count against that feeblest and faintest utterance. The other principle of interpretation is that, where there are seemingly contradictory statements, that which is less explicit and definite is to be interpreted in the light of that which is clear and more explicit.

As an illustration of what I mean, suppose the doctrine of the fall of man appears in some parts of the Bible to be contradicted, or suppose the doctrine of eternal punishment appears to be contradicted, as it certainly is in certain statements of Paul,—for in many places he seems to teach universal salvation,—what is to be done in settling as to the real teachings of the Scriptures? If there be one explicit, definite statement to the effect that the doctrine of eternal punishment is true, a statement that can bear no other interpretation, that seems to be a perfectly clear and definite statement in that direction, the apparent contradictions of it are to be explained away, interpreted after some other fashion.

I wish now, as illustrating this and to show what doctrines



have been deduced from the teachings of the Bible, to point out the bearing of this method of interpretation concerning two or three of these doctrines. Take the doctrine of the fall of man. That is clearly and definitely taught in the very opening book of the Bible. It is true that Jesus has nothing to say about it. He does not mention the fall or the significance of it. It seems very strange, on this supposition of the old theology, that Jesus, who is the second person in the Trinity, who is God himself, who has come into this fallen and lost world on purpose to save it, does not mention the fall. You would expect him most certainly to give some clear and definite statement of the condition of men, and how they came into this condition, and why it was necessary for him to come to this earth to save them. You would think that he would have at least alluded to so important a matter. Yet he says nothing about it. But, on the theory that has been held as to the nature of the Scriptures and the method of their interpretation, this objection fades utterly away. For, since every particle of this Bible is infallibly inspired from beginning to end, the silence of Jesus is to count for nothing as against the explicit statement of the first book of the Bible; and we must believe that, since God is the speaker and the writers are only his various mouth-pieces, the utterance of any one of them is just as much the word of God as the utterance of any other. So the Book of Genesis, though its author is unknown, or the statement of Paul must be regarded as the words of God equally with the words which Jesus himself uttered.

So concerning the doctrine of the total depravity of man. Jesus has said nothing about it, a large number of the writers both of the Old Testament and of the New have said nothing about it; and yet there are certain texts which seem to teach it with the utmost clearness, and these texts

are rightly, on this theory of the Scriptures, made the basis for this doctrine. If we hold this theory of the Scriptures, we cannot escape this conviction.

Again, concerning the atonement, the incarnation, the sufferings and the death of Jesus as the necessary means of appeasing the wrath of God, satisfying the divine justice, and making it possible to forgive those who repent and forsake their sins,—Jesus does not teach this. But it is taught with a great deal of clearness in certain parts of the New Testament. And these direct and explicit teachings, on that theory of the Scriptures, must be held; and this doctrine is rightly deduced from these passages of the New Testament. And so concerning the destiny of the lost, Jesus does appear very plainly in some passages to teach this. At least, it requires a good deal of interpretation to take away the force of the passages in which he is supposed to have taught it. And, since that is so, any teaching of universal salvation which may be found in some other passages of the Bible is to go for nothing. They must have meant something else, for both doctrines cannot be true; and, since the one is clearly and explicitly taught, the other passages must have meant something consistent with this teaching. I speak of this as illustrating the method of the theologians in their interpretation of the teachings of the Scriptures; and I must say in their justification that the method seems to me the method that any clear-headed and earnest man would apply to the interpretation of any document whatsoever.

Now, then, we will pass to consider the theory which they held of the Scriptures themselves; for the theological doctrines must stand or fall by the truth of that theory. If the Scriptures are what has been claimed for them, if they are the infallible word of God from beginning to end, then we must put away all other sources of knowledge, and follow the

direct teaching of this one book. Those men are logical who to-day say concerning the speculations or definite demonstrations of science, "There must be something wrong about them, for here is the word of God ; and God himself certainly could not have been mistaken concerning his own universe." Let us then candidly, earnestly, for a little while consider these Scriptures, and see what we must think about them.

In the first place, the question comes up as a very important one as to whether they are to be treated as one book. Here are sixty-six short treatises, making up the Old Testament and the New, written by different men during a period of at least a thousand years,—written in different countries, under different circumstances. Some of them are history, some laws, some letters written to a church or to a personal friend ; some are prophecies, some psalms, some philosophical treatises. Is there any reason why we should consider all these various treatises as constituting one book? Of course, I must treat the points that I bring up with a great deal of brevity ; and for further consideration and for much of the proof of what I shall allege I shall be obliged to refer you to larger treatises that cover these themes. I can only give you results. I must frankly tell you, however, that I do not know of any reason whatever why we should consider this one book at all, except that it has come to be found within the same covers. There is no proof, so far as I am aware, to be found in all the ages why we should not treat this simply as a body of religious literature, a library instead of a volume.

When we raise the question as to who wrote the books, we must answer that we do not know the authorship of more than a few with anything like certainty. If you ask me when they were written, concerning the most of them I must say

again, nobody knows. If you ask where they were written, we do not know, except in the case of a very few.

Suppose, now, that the author of one of these books claims to be infallible. I must say to you frankly that I do not recall a single place where any one of them does make such a claim. The claim to the infallibility of the Bible is not one put forth by the writers themselves, but one that has grown up in the course of centuries and become a tradition. We cannot offer for it anything in the nature of logical or substantial evidence that any rational man need accept to-day. But suppose some one of the writers should make this claim on his own behalf, what should we think of him? What should we think of a man who should make such a claim to-day? Do you not know perfectly well that, if there should appear in Boston, in this nineteenth century, a man who claimed to be the infallible mouth-piece of God, we should simply treat him kindly as a visionary, or perhaps put him under treatment for insanity? Nobody would think of accepting such a claim. Why, then, should we accept it concerning a man whose name we do not know, of whose country we are ignorant, who lived, nobody knows just when, hundreds or thousands of years ago? Is there any rational ground for accepting such a claim? If there is, I have never, in many years of careful study, been able to find it. But suppose one of these men should make the claim for himself, would that hold good for the rest? Suppose the author of John should claim that he was infallibly inspired: would that cover the inspiration of Luke and Matthew, or the author of one of the books of the Old Testament? I do not see why, since we have concluded that this is a literature, not one book. If we discover the authorship of one book, that applies to him and him alone.

But suppose we felt sure that all the books constituting

the present Bible were infallibly inspired in the beginning: are we at all certain that we have those books precisely as they were first written? Consider a moment, and see. The oldest manuscript we have of any part of the Bible takes us back only to the fourth century. Then we have hundreds and thousands of manuscripts,—some of the Old Testament, some of the New Testament, some of whole books, some of parts of books; and in these manuscripts we find hundreds—yes, thousands—of various readings. They are not all alike. The differences in these readings are, in the main, small, I grant you; but sometimes they extend to half a chapter or to whole verses, so that these differences are, after all, considerable. It is frequently offered as a satisfactory answer to this objection that great care was taken in copying the Scriptures; and they were probably as correctly transmitted as were the writings of Cicero. Probably more care was taken in copying the Bible than in copying the writings of the great Roman orator; but we have a right, concerning a book that claims to give us the infallible mind of the Almighty, to be more critical and careful as to the accuracy of the writing than we are concerning a merely secular writer of philosophy or a deliverer of orations. If any man should come to us with the claim that the destiny of the human race hung on the interpretation of a line of Cicero, then we should inquire with a little more care as to the accuracy of the transcript of his orations.

We are not sure enough, then, of the precise accuracy of any single text in any one of the books of the Bible to give us warranty for asserting that the destiny of the human race hangs upon this verbal statement.

And then again, as we open the Bible to examine it carefully, what do we find? We find that in the early part and all the way through it teaches, what we should naturally

expect, the most inaccurate kind of science. It reflects the ideas of the people of the time in which it was written. Why should it not? Only think for one moment. Suppose some one of the writers of the Bible, either of the Old Testament or of the New, had given us only one hint, one clew, to the Copernican theory of the universe. Think how incontestably it would have established its supernatural origin, that it was something more than human history. But we find nothing of the kind. The science of the Old Testament and of the New Testament is the science of the age which produced the Bible. It is inaccurate in a hundred different ways. I cannot detail them to you or give you the evidence; but it is beyond question that the Bible reflects the scientific ideas of the times when these books were written. It is precisely what we should expect if it were a human production; but it is far from being what we should expect of a Bible divinely inspired and infallible. It is full of historical inaccuracies; and, more important still, its ethical teaching is anything but what we can heartily accept and indorse to-day. The morality of the Old Testament is the morality of the barbarous age in which it was written. It indorsed polygamy, it indorsed slavery. It represents God as not only condoning falsehood, but as practically instructing one of his prophets to tell a lie for the purpose of deceiving and leading into destruction a king that he wished to get out of the way. It indorsed things too horrible to be mentioned in public, not merely gave a history of them, but represented them as the express command, or permission at any rate, of the Almighty. When we come to the New Testament, we liberals are accustomed to say that the Old Testament ethics, of course, is behind the age; but we are very careful and shy about even hinting a criticism of the New. But it seems to me that we must. We are com-



pelled, if we dare to express the results of modern thought, to utter our conviction that the New Testament itself is far from being ethically up to the standard of the best thought and the moral life of the nineteenth century. Jesus teaches theories of political economy which we regard as unwise, and which would result in moral disaster. Paul teaches a doctrine of morality, of the marriage relation, of woman, which is simply an offence to our noblest conception of womanhood, and which, if carried out, would be a degradation of the family life. Prof. Toy, a man who was trained as a Baptist, and who has never, I believe, been turned out of the Baptist communion, one of the foremost scholars of the time, has told us frankly, in a recent article, that the ethics of the New Testament must be admitted to be below the highest level of the moral ideals of the present time.

Then the books of the Bible, from beginning to end, tell different stories, contradict each other in a hundred different ways. I am aware that interpreters have twisted and turned them, and attempted to harmonize the different and apparently contradictory statements over and over and over again. Very likely, if you should make this statement, they would say, That is an old objection: it has been answered a thousand times. But I should reply by quoting the words of a man who seems to me to have hit upon the truth: "It is well for us to keep in mind that an objection is always young till it is satisfactorily answered."

We cannot then, it seems to me, in the light of the science of the modern world, in the light of the historical criticism of the modern world, in the light of the study of comparative religions, in the light that has been thrown on the methods by which Bibles come to be,—we cannot any longer hold this old theory concerning the Scriptures.

We are rationally permitted not only, but we are rationally

compelled, to reconstruct completely our theory concerning these grand books ; for they are grand when we hold them as they are, and do not attempt to put them into a position that their writers never intended them to hold. I feel that, in this changed conception of the Bible, we are not losing the Scriptures : we are finding them for the first time for two thousand years. We are being able to take them for what they are. We are able to handle them rationally, to find out what there is in them, and to apply them to the daily uses of our daily lives. I, for one, shall consider it a great gain when I am able, in this pulpit, to read any part of this Bible and make use of it without the necessity of stopping to explain that I think this or that about it, that I do not regard the story of a miracle as literally true. I should like to be able to read the story of Jesus turning water into wine, or the raising of Lazarus, or the feeding of the multitude with the five loaves and the two fishes, without stopping to explain that I do not believe that this is literal history. I should like to be able to read it for what it is,—the grand literature of a grand people, the biography of a race ; for it is nothing more nor less than the religious biography of a great nation, invaluable to us to-day, if we know how to use it, as teaching us how it is that religious ideas spring up and grow, and how they are transformed, and to what they come as the result of centuries of progress. Rabbi Hirsch, one of the great Hebrew scholars of the country at the present time, has told us that this theory of the infallible inspiration of the Old Testament is something that the Jews never thought of holding. They believed, he says, that it was the people who were inspired,—the great church in which the Holy Spirit lived,—a people God-inspired and God-led, and that these books were simply the expression of their opinions at the time. They considered themselves under the guidance of this living spirit of

God, but perfectly free at any time to modify or change. Mr. Baring-Gould, one of the leading scholars of the present time in the English Church, says the same in relation to the New Testament. He says it is the expression of the opinion of the early Church. It is the Church, in his theory, that is inspired; and, under the guidance of God, it is competent to outgrow and to modify and change and leave behind any of the teachings of the New Testament, and substitute in their place the living truth of the living God to-day.

I wish now to note a few of the advantages that accrue to us as the result of giving up the old and accepting this new theory of the Scriptures.

In the first place, we are relieved from an enormous responsibility. If we accept and continue to hold the old theory, then we must be perpetually apologizing for God. We must be always trying to explain how it was that he did not teach the truth concerning the origin and creation of the world. We must try to explain why he made such impossible statements concerning the exodus of the Israelites, for instance. We are taught that a nation of about three million souls, with the old and the young, the sick and the well, with all their household furniture, their cattle, their flocks, with everything which they possessed — that is, as many people as lived in the whole of this country at the time of the Revolution — were able to go out in a body, and leave the land of Goshen, in one night. If we hold that theory, we must try to explain how the infallible spirit of God could ever have made such a statement. We must try to explain how it happened that God in those old times should have indorsed such immoralities as shock and revolt the hearts of men at the present time. It seems to me to be an immense gain to be able to treat this grand old book as just what it is, to treat it as the outcome of the heart and the thought

and the life of its age; to note how, as the world becomes more civilized, the level of thought, the level of its moral teaching, rises and rises, becoming higher and higher; how the light seems to increase toward the dawn of a better day that we trust is now before us.

Then there is one other advantage. We gain something in this theory that seems to me grander than the Bible itself. We gain the conviction that this race of ours is made up of the kind of beings that make Bibles. Think of the changed conception of the spiritual nature of man! Instead of looking upon him as abject and utterly lost, lying prostrate and helpless, with no power to lift himself out of that position, think of this marvellous race of ours blossoming and bearing fruit like this out of its own brain and heart and spiritual life. It is grander than the Bible to think that man can make Bibles. Grander than any picture is the artist who is able to paint the picture.

Then we begin to sympathize with the other nations of the world, these other Bible-makers of every land and of every age. We are not compelled to think of them as having been forgotten of God, left outside the pale of his mercy and care, blundering; stupid, walking and falling into the ditch or into difficulties of every kind, only at last to take the final leap over the precipice into endless ruin. Instead of that, we see them also lifting up brain and heart, under the impulse of this spiritual aspiration, and blossoming out into these marvels,—these literatures, these books consecrated as the Bibles of the world.

We have one more grand gain. These old Bible writers, Paul, the authors of the Gospels, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the singers of those wondrous Psalms,—these come back to us, no longer mere instruments that some inexplicable power used with which to write, but men, our brothers, kindred



souls, whom we can love to associate with, whose words we love to listen to, as being human, loving, tender words of wisdom, words that touch us more deeply because they are not infallible. We feel their own hearts beat. We come into sympathy with the throbbing of their questioning brains. We see them looking out over this universe, and wondering over the same problems that we are still trying to solve; and we take hold of their hands, and feel the kinship and brotherhood. And they become masters, teachers of those of us who are humble enough to accept their mighty suggestions of truth; for, when some man, no matter if he be not infallible, who is intellectually so much taller than I am that it seems reasonable that his outlook over the world must be wider and of grander sweep, tells me that he sees something beyond my ken, it is at least rational for me to say that perhaps he does, and to be comforted, to be lifted up, to be inspired, by the thought that the grand vision which he says he sees may be true. When I am hidden in some low valley before the sun rises, and I catch the first faint gleam of light kindling a far-off summit, though I cannot see the sun, I know there is a sun; and I know that it is rising, for there is the reflection of its presence. So, when some of these mountain souls are kindled with light, with suggestions of sunrise, while still invisible to me, it is rational for me to believe that that may be a shining from that country where the sun never goes down; and comfort and cheer and new courage may come into my heart.

And when we stand in this hopeful position, with all the Bibles of all the world before us, with all their grand writers, teachers, witnesses, as our brothers and friends, able to use all these and rejoice in them, we stand free to listen to the latest living utterance of the living God, in the sure confidence that the source of truth is not exhausted, that there

is more light, as the old Pilgrim preacher, John Robinson, said, still to break out of God's holy word, more light to break out of his holy earth, more light to break out of his holy heavens, more light to break out of these consecrated human brains, more light to burst forth from these noble human hearts. And we stand free to listen and look and accept, and to take God's hand and let him lead us into ever new and better ways.

## COSMOLOGY AND THEOLOGY.

---

IN the opening sermon of this series, I referred to two or three very important revolutions in modern thought through which the world is passing to-day; and I told you at that time that I should have occasion later on in this course to speak of some of these with more definiteness and particularity. The time for reviewing at least one of these great revolutions of thought has arrived this morning. I propose, therefore, to discuss with you the relation which exists between our theories of the universe and our theological beliefs. I have three main points which I wish to make, three objects in view.

In the first place, I wish to point out to you how intimate, how vital, is the relation between cosmology, or the theory of the world, and theology; to show that theology roots itself in, springs out of, is adapted to, takes the shape of, the theory of the world which we happen to hold; to show that the two inevitably go together; and to intimate to you that, if there ever comes a radical change in our theory of the world, there must of necessity come a like radical change in our theological beliefs.

Second, I wish to show you that the popular theology, the theology of the last thousand or fifteen hundred years, has sprung out of and is vitally related to the old cosmology, the old theory of the universe.

Third, I wish to indicate to you the profound, sweeping,

radical change that is passing over the thought of men concerning the nature of the universe, and to hint to you that this change is so radical, so profound, so far-reaching, that it will be found a simple impossibility for the old theology to continue permanently to live in the new universe. These are the three points to which I wish to call your earnest attention this morning.

At the outset, however, I wish to raise a question which has been put to me a good many times, and which is a perfectly natural and legitimate question, and the answer to which ought to throw a great deal of light on our thinking, as to why this great change in theological thought should come just now in the history of the world. Why did it not come five hundred years ago? Why did it not wait for five hundred years from this time? Why are we in the midst of these great changes, transitions, discussions, concerning the fundamental problems of the universe, of God, of man, and of destiny? Why is this great unrest upon this particular generation?

And,—another question,—if the change is coming at all, why does it not come more rapidly? Why does not everybody accept the results of these new ideas at once?

The answer to the first question, as to why just now this change is coming over the world, will lead me a long way, in consideration of the nature of human thought concerning the world in which we live. Suppose, for example, that man has inhabited this planet two hundred thousand years; and that is an estimate which is a very rational one, in the light of modern science and of our knowledge of its origin and development. Up to within four hundred years,—four hundred compared with two hundred thousand,—substantially the same ideas have been held by all men, in all nations, under the teachings of all religions, everywhere, concerning



the nature of the universe and of the relations of God to it. Up to within four hundred years, I repeat, substantially the same fundamental principles have ruled human thought in this regard. In ancient Greece, a few promising steps were taken towards a rational scientific conception of the world. But Plato, by the weight of his great name as a philosophical thinker, turned the philosophical world into ideal channels and away from the scientific conception of the nature of things. Then speedily came Christianity, accepting the old Hebrew theories of the world as divinely revealed to man; and it became from that time forth a sin to raise any question concerning the nature of things. It is only within a few, say four or five hundred years, that there has been such freedom of thought in the world, such an accumulation of knowledge, such an observation of facts, as to enable the human mind even to begin the formation of a theory that might claim for itself the warrant of facts. It is, therefore, only within these few hundred years that an attempt has been made in this direction. That is the reason why all the burden of this theological thought and change comes upon this generation, upon us of the modern world.

Men do not accept these ideas any more rapidly for a perfectly natural reason. We inherit our thoughts in this direction. Even the very substance of our brain is run in certain moulds, so that it takes generations for any widespread change in popular thought to take place. Men see new truth, and begin to teach it; but it is generations before it is sifted down through the different strata of intellectual life until it becomes the property of everybody.

As an illustration in this direction, where there was much less theological bitterness involved to act as a hindrance, take the change from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican system. It was two or three hundred years before the change

was accepted by everybody or before people thought naturally in the midst of the new ideas. Traces of the old conception are still imbedded in our language, in our modes of expression. We still talk about the sun's rising and setting, though we know it does nothing of the kind. Lurking in the hidden corners of our brain are all sorts of remnants still of that old theory of things that has passed away from the minds of intelligent men.

I wish, now, to give to you some idea, as briefly as I can, consistently with clearness, of the theory of the world that has been held from the beginning till this modern age, and to show you how naturally, how inevitably, the old theology springs out of it. I need not take your time by picturing the childish, the quaint, and sometimes the grotesque ideas which certain barbaric people have held as to the origin of things. If you are curious in that direction, you may find them pointed out in any work on popular mythology. I shall begin with that which was generally held by the Hebrew people at an early period of their history.

It was popularly believed that the tabernacle which was set up in the wilderness was patterned after the plan of the universe, so that, by studying the structure of the tabernacle, we can get an idea of what they thought about the world. And we know from the writings, not only of the Jews themselves, but from the writings of the early Christian geographers, very clearly and definitely what those ideas were. They pictured the universe as an oblong square, a kind of three-story structure. In the middle was the flat earth, surrounded on all sides by the ocean. The world of the departed, when they began to believe in such a world, was a sort of underground cavern—a cellar, as one might say—in this universe house. Then overhead, just a little way above the stars, was heaven, where God sat on a throne,

surrounded by a court patterned after that of an Oriental king, with messengers at his right hand and his left. And from this throne he looked down over the world of men, sending his orders in this direction and that, as a king might send a courier to direct how this thing or that should be done in carrying out his will. This was the general conception of the world. And how very small it was it is extremely difficult for us now, accustomed as we are to think of the Infinite, even to conceive.

Let me give you a hint of this by looking at the conceptions of the universe that were held by Dante and Milton. Then I will say something concerning the relative size of that old universe and the present one.

Dante lived in the thirteenth century, a little less than six hundred years ago. Think of that as compared with the immense time that man has been on this planet. He believed indeed that the world was round, but that there was land only on the upper part of it, and that all the rest was water. Jerusalem was precisely in the centre of the earth. Underneath this land there was a funnel-shaped cavity reaching precisely to the centre of the earth. At this central point was Satan, imprisoned forever in solid ice; and round him, in concentric circles, rising tier above tier, were the different gradations of hell, according to the degree of punishment which was to be inflicted upon the offenders imprisoned there. Upon the opposite side of the world from Jerusalem rose the mountain of Purgatory, where were the souls that had not committed sins that would keep them in hell forever, but where there were graded punishments which they must suffer till they had expiated their offences and could be received into Paradise. Outside of the world, which was stationary, there were nine spheres, solid, but crystal and transparent. I do not know how to give you a

definite idea of it, unless I ask you to think of nine globes like those that cover our gas jets,—nine crystal globes, one outside of the other. To these were attached the moon, the sun, the planets, and the fixed stars beyond all the planets. Beyond that was another sphere, which was supposed to be in some way connected with the divine power, and to impart motion to all the rest. These spheres revolved, carrying the planets round with them. This was the only theory they could form for the explanation of the movement of the heavenly bodies five hundred years ago.

Glance now at Milton's universe. It was a clear and definite outline of the finest conception of the Ptolemaic theory. And Milton, remember, was writing *Paradise Lost* not far from the time when this our good city was founded, so that it is less than three hundred years ago. Milton believed that the world was spherical. He held substantially the same idea that Dante did, only he had his hell in another place. The world was one little spot at the centre of the universe. The whole universe might be represented by a great circle cut in two across the centre, within which the world was suspended. Two-thirds of the way down from the equatorial line was the upper dome of hell, that might be compared with the antarctic circle. Heaven was the upper half of the great circle. Round the earth were nine concentric spheres similar to those of Dante. How large was this universe of which Milton writes in his great poem? He says when Satan was cast out of heaven that he was nine days in falling clear to the bottom of everything. Satan was nine days falling from heaven to the nadir. Now, light travels so fast that it takes but eight and a half minutes to come from the sun to the earth; and yet, with that degree of rapidity, we know that it takes three and a half years for it to reach our next door neighbor after we leave our little

solar system. And, when you are there, you are only on the threshold of the infinite universe. I speak of this to indicate to you the comparative size of the universe as men thought of it until within three hundred years. A little tiny play-house was the grandest conception of the universe that men held till modern science came and taught us what a magnificent home is this in which our Infinite Father lives and works.

Now, I wish to outline for you some of the essential ideas connected with this conception of the universe, and with them the essential ideas of our popular theology, to show to you how the two go together, how they are inevitably, vitally, related to each other. If you get these once in your mind, you will no longer wonder that the old theology has existed so long, and you will have perceived more profound reasons than ever for believing that it cannot continue to exist after the great changes through which we are passing have been completed.

1. According to this old theory of things, God was supposed to have lived in the universe from all eternity before creating the world. Suddenly he creates this system of things. He creates it as a being working on material that is outside of him, precisely as a carpenter might build a ship or a house. This God was supposed to be an individualized being situated in some far-off, definite point in space, and from that point sending out his orders. He creates man, making him suddenly, finished all at once. And for what purpose? Church tradition tells us that there was war in heaven, and that one-third of all the inhabitants of heaven revolted against God and were cast out for that rebellion; and it was to receive them, to become their prison-house, that hell was created. God then created man, intending to train this human race of ours so as to fill up

this vacancy in heaven; that is, develop these creatures so that they might behold his glory and abide with him and his angels forever in the celestial city.

2. When God had created man, he had, according to the old ideas, a perfect right to do with him anything that he pleased. Paul argues at length that man stands in the same relation to God that the clay does to the potter. The potter does not ask the clay what sort of a vessel he shall make out of it, but he does what it pleases him: he makes one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor. And so the old theologians told us that God had a right to do with men as he pleased, illustrating through some his mercy and goodness, and through some his justice and power and wrath. That is the baldest expression of that idea which now all moralists repudiate with indignation. It is the theory that might makes right, and that he who has power is justified in using that power as he wills. We have come to think, in this modern world, on the other hand, that power, instead of conferring right, carries along with it the most tremendous of all responsibilities.

3. After God had created man, he issued certain commands. He told Adam, says the story, that he might eat of any tree in the garden save one particular tree. The point I wish to notice here is that this supposed command of Deity is apparently arbitrary. He is represented as ruling man as a despot rules his subjects. His will is law. Anything that he tells them that they must not do, they must not do under penalty. Anything that he tells them that they may do, they may do and be rewarded. And yet, so far as we can see, there is no natural, necessary distinction of right and wrong in these things at all. There is no reason that we can find why God should not have picked out some other tree than that precise one, and have forbidden them to eat of that. To us the



command seems perfectly arbitrary. And here is the origin of the distinction that has gone through all theological thought, and from which we are but getting free to-day,—a distinction between natural goodness and piety or religion. Piety, religion, was the doing of those things which God had arbitrarily commanded. He issues decrees, he passes laws. Those laws are not a part of the nature of things, not inherent in the world, in the structure of man, in the structure of society; and, if they did not obey these laws, he had a right to punish them to any extent he pleased. There has always been this distinction between natural and religious goodness. When Mr. Moody was last in this city, he used that phrase that has been quoted so often that it is trite, but that is so intimately bound up with this distinction that I must repeat. He told us that morality did not touch the question of salvation. And he was perfectly consistent, perfectly right, according to the old theological ideas. Here were men who had broken these arbitrary laws of God; and he had a right, according to those ideas, to do with them as he pleased, to punish them as he would for their disobedience. He need not ask the question whether they were kind in their families, whether they paid their debts, whether they stood in right relations to their neighbors. None of these things are of any importance as compared with the question how they were related to God. If a province of a kingdom is in rebellion, or if a man has committed an overt act of treason, the question is never raised whether he loves his children, whether he is kind and honest towards his fellow-men. These virtues have nothing whatever to do with that other question, whether a pardon shall be granted. Man having then revolted against this supreme power, God had a right to establish any conditions of pardon that he chose. If a man has forfeited his life, he has no claim whatever on the supreme

power. That power may use its discretion as to whether it will forgive him or not and on what conditions.

4. Then, under this old theory, you will notice that a miraculous government of the world does not seem at all incongruous. God is outside of this system of nature. He looks over the world as a thing external to himself; and why should he not—this little tiny universe such as they believed it,—why should he not interfere with it, for the sake of carrying out his plans of redeeming the elect? Why should he not, in answer to prayer, interfere with one of these little laws, which could not be supposed to be of much importance, except as to the development of his church on earth? Why not stop the movement of the little sun in the heavens, if he might answer the prayer of one of his famous saints or heroes? All this was perfectly natural on that theory of the universe.

5. Then the old conception of the Bible is part of it. God's laws not being inherent in the nature of things, not the laws of the body and heart and mind and spirit, but external, arbitrary commands, there was need of a code of laws being published, so that his subjects might know what they were. And that is precisely the idea that underlies all the old thoughts of the divine revelation. There was no way by which people could be supposed to find out what God wanted of them, except as he published his commands. This is the idea underlying the whole scheme of revelation.

6. Then, again, under that theory, the church becomes so many of these men and women as have accepted the terms of pardon and have arrayed themselves on the Lord's side. They become God's army in the world, as they have been always called,—“the church militant,”—to fight his enemies. It is their business to proclaim the terms of God's pardon, to get as many rebels as possible to lay down their arms



and come over to the Lord's side. This is the purpose for which the church existed ; and it was perfectly natural under the old theory of the universe and of man.

7. The world and its inhabitants having been created to make good the loss of those who were cast out of heaven, it was natural that the system should be brought to an end when that end was accomplished ; and how more naturally than by a general judgment, an assize where men should be tested, a sort of competitive examination to find out who could fulfil the terms by which they could be admitted into heaven? A general judgment was a necessary part of the scheme to wind up all mundane affairs. Those who were rejected had no right to make any complaints ; for they had had an opportunity to accept the same terms with the rest, and had declined to do so. They had deliberately revolted against God, and could not complain if they must share the lot of his adversaries. So that heaven and hell were a necessary part of this plan as a natural close of the whole scheme.

I wish you to note—and it is for this purpose that I have gone over this point by point—that every single one of the doctrines making up the old scheme of theology is a necessary part of that theory of the world. They root themselves in it, and spring out of it. They take their shape from it, and adapt themselves to it. They are a vital and necessary part of it.

But you will note, also, that, if there should come a radical change in this conception of the world, all the doctrines of theology springing out of that old theory must feel the change, and can find no place in a radically different conception of the world. Now has such a change come about? It is precisely this change that has been going on in men's minds concerning the nature of the universe which has com-

pelled all this reconstruction, which has set the modern mind into a ferment, which has caused this religious unrest. Up to the time of Kepler, the discoverer of the three laws of planetary motion, men had never risen to a rational conception of any way by which the planets could be kept in their spheres, and their motions in their orbits continued, except the idea, which Kepler himself held, that an angel was delegated to reside in each planet to control its movements. They knew of no natural explanation whatever. As late as the time of Newton, the first demonstration was made of any natural force or power that was able to explain the motion of the heavenly bodies. Here, then, in the discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, Newton, begins this great change concerning the nature of the world that has been carried on by scientific students since their day, until at last we have discovered the antiquity of this earth and of man,—the natural origin and development of the human race. And the work of change seems to be nearing its completion. I ask you to note that this radical change is so far-reaching that it must compel complete reconstruction of all our thought. I will take your time only a few minutes in pointing out some of the essentials of that change.

1. What now do we think of the universe? Instead of its being a tiny affair created at a definite point in the history of things, created by a power from without, we know that this physical universe is practically infinite. We cannot even dream of a limit in space. We not only think, we know that it is practically eternal in duration. We cannot even dream of a time when it did not exist.

2. And what of God? We no longer think of him as a being outside of things, working on them from without. We think of him as the spirit, the life, as, so to speak, the soul of the universe, as my soul inheres in my body. Where?

I do not know. Is it located? I do not know. It seems to be everywhere, animating every part of me from head to foot,—my physical, mental, affectional, spiritual life. The soul is myself. And so God is in the universe, its spirit, its life. Where? Everywhere. In the grass-blade as well as in the sun, in the life of human civilization, in the progress of man.

3. And now where are the laws of God? What are his laws? They are no longer thought of as statutory enactments. They are not the expression of any arbitrary will. They are no longer written by inspiration in any book. The laws of God are only such laws as are inherent in the nature of things, the laws of his world, the laws illustrated in human life, human thought, human feeling, human aspiration. The laws of God are the essential constituting laws of the universe and human life and growth. If these ever become written in any book, so far they are God's laws. If any other laws are written in all the books of the world, they are not God's laws, but the vain imaginings of man. The laws of God are the vital laws, the laws by which all things exist, by which all things grow, by which they reach on towards the higher and the better.

4. Under this conception of the universe, you see very easily that there is no place for miracle. The man who has accepted the modern theory of things does not care to argue or question about miracle. It seems to him absurd on the face of it. It is ruled out as having no place in the universe. He believes that God is not outside of these laws, so that he can break them. They are God's habits of working, his methods of thought, the thrilling impulses of his very life, so that any miracle that should interfere with these would be a very contradiction of the methods of God's working. It would be as though God should interfere with one hand with what he is doing with the other.

5. Under this theory there is no possible room for forgiveness, in the old sense of the word ; that is, such a forgiveness as releases a person from the results of his own thoughts, feelings, actions. This modern universe knows no such forgiveness as that. Under the inflexible laws of cause and effect, things move on to their accomplishment. This is no hopeless doctrine, but the most cheerful doctrine in all the world. For these forces of which we are a part, and which environ us on every hand, are not dominating us and making us their victims. Rather are we largely able to dominate them, to reshape and control them, so that a man may work himself out of all the evil results of his past, and turn these dead selves into stepping-stones by which to "climb to higher things."

6. And then as to the future. A man is good if he is in accord with these natural, necessary, divine laws of life. And, if he is good in this life and in this world, he is good in any world; and, if he is bad in this world, he will be bad in any world,—getting into heaven would not help him one whit. The only salvation is to get into accord with these divine laws that constitute the nature of things. And if a man be in accord with this nature of things,—since there is one God, one force, one law, throughout the universe,—if he be in harmonious accord with these laws, he must of necessity be in harmony with the entire universe in whatever world he may some day find himself.

These only as a hint of the kind of universe in which we find ourselves in the modern world. I need not argue it at any length. In this universe there is absolutely no place for the old theological beliefs. They are uncalled for. They have no mission to fulfil, no part to play. They are as antiquated and outgrown as are the astronomical devices for making the planets move in their orbits that the Ptole-

maic scientists dreamed of. Newton's law of gravity explains the movements of all the heavenly bodies everywhere, so that those devices are as children's playthings that a man outgrows. So these conceptions of the modern world that are coming to be a part of the popular thought have antiquated and left behind all the old theological makeshifts which were a part of the old theories, which have passed away from the minds of every free and intelligent man and woman. It will be long I know before the change will be completely recognized, frankly seen, and accepted by everybody, because it takes time for ideas that are so sweeping, so far-reaching, so universal in their scope, to become a part of the furnishing of the average brain. But the change is as inevitable as is the coming of day, when the first faint streak of light is seen in the east. It is a long while before the world is light. The highest hill-tops catch the flush first, while shadows cover the valleys. It is still dark as night in the lowest places of the earth. But the change is coming; and, just as fast as the old world wheels over and turns its dark places to the sun, the light comes in and the shadows flee away.

## IDEAS OF GOD, OLD AND NEW.

---

I PROPOSE to treat this great theme as comprehensively as I can in the time that is allowed me, under three different aspects,—as to the nature of God, as to his character, and as to his relations to man.

I shall first outline, as fairly as I know how, the thoughts about him that have been held in the old churches of the past, and that are still represented in their creeds, and then the new ideas that are forced upon us by the growth of humanity in knowledge and in moral ideals.

It does not seem to me at all strange that in the progress of thought on this great subject there is a sense on the part of many of something in the way of bewilderment and loss. Men have waked up to find themselves in a boundless universe; and, when they ask what God is or where, their question seems to be lost in the wide reaches of empty space. The universe is so immense that it is hard for us to find in it a resting-place for those old affections of the heart,—hard to find a nest where we may be quiet and at peace. At first thought, it was certainly easier to feel that God was near to us when we held the old views. Go back for a moment to Rachel, when she was leaving her father's house. The gods that she trusted in, from which she derived comfort and peace, were certain small portable images or idols that she could carry with her. As she was leaving home, it is said that she stole them from her father and hid

them in the furnishings of the camel on which she was riding, thinking that thus she was carrying with her the presence of these divine beings, who might insure her comfort, support, prosperity and peace. If our deities are such that we can see them, handle them, come into this sensible contact with them, carry them about with us, it is easy to have a sense of the divine nearness and presence. In any case, when the universe was so very small, when God was supposed to hold his court only a little way out of sight above the blue, whence he could despatch an angel messenger to be at our side almost before a prayer could die into an echo on our lips, it was very easy to think of God as close by, and of divine help as real and accessible. Even the great system of the universe, which bears the name of Ptolemy, and which was almost infinitely larger than the early dreams of the world, was still comparatively small. God was not far away. There was a place where he could be found. He abode at some particular spot. A prayer could reach him, a messenger could be sent from him to us. He was a tangible being to the mind of man; and so it was easy to think of him as near us. But to-day all these forms have faded; and we stand tiny specks, self-conscious indeed, thinking, wondering, but knowing that we are in a limitless universe, and not able to picture to our thought one single spot where God is in any sense different from that in which he is in every spot and everywhere. And the first thought, I say, is naturally bewilderment and loss.

I propose now to outline as clearly and as simply as possible some of the old ideas, and then to outline some of the new, and to suggest the question whether God is really lost to us, really farther away, really less accessible than in the olden days.

Some of the early Hebrew thinkers believed and taught

that God was not only personal, but a personal being in the sense that we are ; that he was not only in a particular place, but that he had a body. And some of the old theologians of the Church held and taught precisely the same ideas, that God was a being embodied. The Old Testament hints the same idea in a great many places. When Moses went up into the mountain, he saw God ; and the brightness was so dazzling that its reflection on the face of Moses was so radiant that the people could not look upon him after he descended. God wrote with his finger the commandments on the tables of stone. In many places there are representations or, at least, glimpses or traces of his having been seen. Either, then, he was embodied or assumed form and shape for the time being, according to these Old Testament teachings. But it is only just for us to say that most of the Hebrew and most of the Christian theologians have taught in the most explicit way that God is pure spirit, without body, parts or passions. They taught it in as clear and grand a way, so far as that part of it is concerned, as we can teach it or think it to-day. Only I think it fair to say that throughout the entire history of the Church it has been taught that God was, in some special, particular way, located somewhere. Dante, in his poem of the "Paradiso," represents that there is one special place, not where God can be literally seen, but where the outshining of his glory is such that he is hidden by excess of light. He in some special sense is there, but the glory is too bright for mortal senses to discern more than the outshining far away.

Milton gives us substantially the same picture in his *Paradise Lost*. There is a special place in heaven where God abides as he does nowhere else in the universe. Here is his throne, the seat and centre of his power, whence radiates all the wondrous working force of his might to the uttermost



points of the universe. And you are perfectly well aware — you who are acquainted with the staple of preaching on this subject — that every little while there are speculative sermons preached on the subject, Where is the seat of God's power, where is heaven? whether it is located in some special star or planet. I think Mr. Talmage, within two or three years, has taught that probably heaven and the throne of God and the seat of his power are to be found on some central star of all the universe round which everything else is supposed to be revolving. I speak of these to show that the old theology has not wholly outgrown as yet this attempt to locate God at some specific point in the universe.

Now, as to the nature of God. I have already treated in part what I had in mind to say of their teaching of his being, of his power over the life of all things, of his being located at some specific point in the universe. Now, I wish to give you a definition of that curious speculation of the Church as to the interior structure, so to speak, of the nature of deity. I am going to impose on your patience to the extent of reading to you the definition of the Trinity, as embodied in the Athanasian Creed. I doubt if there be a single person in this house — you will not think that I am impeaching your intelligence — who can give a clear, explicit definition of the doctrine of the Trinity. Perhaps I ought to except one or two, when I make that statement. It is not strange, however, that you are not able to do it, as you have not studied it especially. But it did seem to me strange about the time I was leaving the orthodox church, when my people were troubled as to whether I was sound or not on the doctrine of the Trinity, that after some weeks of inquiry I was not able to find a single one of my church members who could tell me what the doctrine of the Trinity was. Every time I asked the question, they gave it to me in some mutilated

form that had been condemned as heresy in some council of the Church. I should like, then, to put the doctrine of the Trinity on record here, so that you may be able to refer to it, and know what it is :—

1. Whosoever will be saved : before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith :

2. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled : without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

3. And the Catholic Faith is this : That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity ;

4. Neither confounding the Persons : nor dividing the Substance (Essence).

5. For there is one Person of the Father ; another of the Son ; and another of the Holy Ghost.

6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one ; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal.

7. Such as the Father is ; such is the Son : and such is the Holy Ghost.

8. The Father uncreate (uncreated) : the Son uncreate (uncreated) : and the Holy Ghost uncreate (uncreated).

9. The Father incomprehensible (unlimited) : the Son incomprehensible (unlimited) : and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible (unlimited, or infinite).

10. The Father eternal : the Son eternal : and the Holy Ghost eternal.

11. And yet they are not three eternals : but one eternal.

12. As also they are not three uncreated : nor three incomprehensibles (infinities), but one uncreated : and one incomprehensible (infinite).

13. So likewise the Father is Almighty : the Son almighty : and the Holy Ghost almighty.

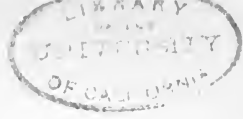
15. So the Father is God : the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God.

16. And yet they are not three Gods : but one God.

17. So likewise the Father is Lord : the Son is Lord : and the Holy Ghost Lord.

18. And yet not three Lords : but one Lord.

19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity : to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord :



20. So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion: to say, There be (are) three Gods, or three Lords.
21. The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.
22. The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten.
23. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.
24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.
25. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is greater, or less than another (there is nothing before, or after: nothing greater or less).
26. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal.
27. So that in all things, as afore-said: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped.
28. He therefore that will be saved, must (let him) thus think of the Trinity.

So much, then, as to the nature of God as taught by the old faiths. I shall not take your time by entering upon any discussion of this mystery of the Trinity or any attempt to disprove it. I am simply outlining now this old teaching as to the nature of God.

Now let me pass to the second point,—the divine character as taught in the old creeds. The grandest words are used to tell us that God is everything perfect that we can conceive. That must be admitted in all simplicity and fairness. He is almighty in power, almighty in wisdom, almighty in goodness. All divine characteristics are ascribed to him; and yet there are traces of contradiction running all through these old ideas of him. It is not strange that this should be so. Men were confronted at the first with the dual nature of the universe. If there was light, there was also darkness. If there was warmth, there was also cold. If there was life, there was also death. If there was joy, there was also sorrow. If there was goodness, benevolence, gen-

erosity, there was also evil of every kind and name. Men were confronted with the problem, How to reconcile these contradictions? Some of the early religions did it through their multiplicity of gods. They had good gods and bad gods. The Persians, by the grandest thought in this specific direction that the world has seen, solved it by supposing that there were two equal deities in universal and perpetual conflict,—one good and one bad. They imagined some incomprehensible destiny above these age-long conflicts, that was some time to solve and to bring out of the darkness and the evil good and joy. The early Christian Church was led into its controversy with the Manichæans over this question. And who were the Manichæans? They were simply those who maintained a sort of Persian dualism. They believed that there was a good infinite spirit and a bad spirit which was almost infinite. The Church, then, had this problem to solve; and it has solved it, it seems to me, in an entirely unsatisfactory and inconsistent way, and it must be reconstructed in order to bring it into accord with the highest thought of the civilized world. For, while the Church has always taught that God was infinite goodness and wisdom and love and power, it has also taught that he created the world, and then either ordained, as it has been generally taught, or permitted—the difference in morals is hardly perceptible—the fall of man and his utter ruin through sin. This might be consistent with the goodness of God, if there were to be some redemption, some deliverance, from all this evil; but the Church has taught that this was the final condition of things. This evil, this sin, this sorrow, were final, concerning the larger part of the race. It has taught that God has permitted, through all these ages, the greater part of the world to lie in ignorance and darkness concerning his very wishes and commands, thus showing him partial, as

having selected only a few upon whom to bestow the grace of his guidance and his love.

God, then, in the old doctrines seems to me to be thus a divided, impossible, inconsistent being ; for, as Tennyson in one of his poems passionately exclaims,

“A God of love and of hell together — it cannot be thought!”

No man can think contradictions into unity. There is no bringing together the thought of infinite love, infinite sorrow, and endless pain. The teachings, then, of the old Church concerning the character of God seem to me utterly inconsistent and untenable; for, while they ascribe to him all honor, glory, beauty, goodness, they have pictured him — nay, they picture him to-day in their creeds—as—how shall I express myself?—as a worse being than any man that ever lived. There is no character in human history, there is no character in human poetry, there is no character in fiction that men have ever dreamed, so utterly evil and cruel as is the character of God as depicted in the popular creeds of the world. This alongside of infinite goodness. So much, then, for the divine character in the old teaching.

3. Now, a word as to the relation in which he has been supposed to stand to man. Of course, he was Creator, he was Father. But, immediately after the fall of man, he is supposed to have withdrawn himself; and there is a gulf between the Father and his children. Instead of exercising love and kindness and tender mercy, he is angry with the wicked every day. Of course, he pours out upon the world the general mercies of sunshine and rain, the bestowal of the ordinary good things of life; but he is supposed to be at enmity with his children. Hence arose the necessity of the doctrine of atonement, by which to bridge over this gulf of separation. The birth, life, teachings, suffering, and death

of Jesus of Nazareth were devised to provide a mediator between the estranged and alienated children of God and his still fatherly heart, that is capable of being fatherly at least towards those children who repent. God grew to be an inexorable and far-away power; and the human hearts of the world turned, in their love, their helplessness, their weakness, to the tenderness and pity of Jesus, thinking of him as an entirely separate being. It seems to me perfectly clear that, in spite of the definitions of the creed, Jesus has been looked upon as an entirely separate being, standing apart from God, in his presence, and showing his hands and the wound in his side, and pleading with the inexorable Father that for his sake he would be kind and tender to his children.

But, in the course of theological development, Jesus himself became withdrawn from the sympathies of man, and turned into the inexorable judge; for it is Jesus who is to sit on the throne at the last day, and say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." But the human heart still longed for tenderness and pity somewhere; and hence arose the belief in the motherhood of Mary as being something divine, and so arose the belief in thousands of saints who could still feel the infirmities of their brethren, and on account of their merits plead with God for mercy and help and sympathy for their brethren. So much, then, for the relation in which God has been supposed to stand to man.

However much of comfort and of cheer may have seemed to go out of the world with the departure of these old-time thoughts of God, it seems to me very strange indeed when I hear any one lament the change. My experience with those who have held to these old beliefs is that the fear frequently, almost generally, predominates over the comfort. By as much as their consciences are tender, by so much do

people stand in awe of this inexorable being, and wonder whether they have really complied with the conditions, so that they may look for pardon and peace.

Let me speak now a little concerning the nature and character of God and his relation to man, as we are compelled to think of them in the modern world? What is God's nature? What shall we think of God? In one way, we cannot think God. If we could define God, we should be atheists; for what does definition mean? It means drawing a line about anything. Can you draw a line about the infinite? Any circle that can be drawn must of necessity exclude unspeakably more than it can include. We cannot, then, define deity. By as much as God is really God, infinite power, infinite wisdom, infinite love, he must forever exceed on every hand, so that we cannot grasp the divine. But we must think something. I think of God as the infinite spirit, life of all the universe. If you ask me where he is, I do not know how I can do better by way of illustration than to touch once more upon one that I used some time ago. Where is God in the modern world? Where is he not? There is not one spot, I suppose, where we can think that he abides in any special or peculiar sense. But all his wisdom, all his power, all his love, are here, at any point in the universe, at any moment. Instead of there being an empty boundless space, God fills with his thrilling life all spaces and all worlds.

Where is my soul, my life, whatever you choose to call it? Is it in my head or my hand or my foot or my heart? It is in them all. At any particular time, it is there where I concentrate my thought, my feeling, my action. When I am writing, I am at the point of my pen. When I am feeling love, I am in that feeling, all of me. When I am thinking, I am in that thought. I am as indivisible as God.

It is as hard to locate me in my visible frame as it is to locate God in space. God, then, is the life, the power, the light of all things everywhere.

Is he personal? I think he is, with my definition of the word "person." One of the faults I have to find with the old doctrines is that they limit his personality to three different manifestations. Not only do I believe that God is tri-personal, I believe that he is multi-personal. For what does personal mean? Person is a word that originally meant the mask of an actor. When he put on a mask representing a special character, he was that person for the time being. That was the origin of the term. When God manifests himself with power, wisdom, goodness, in any one direction, there he is personally manifested in the old sense of the word. But is he personal in that other, grander sense in which we use the term? Again, I believe he is,—not as you are a person and I am a person. He was not born. He will not die. He is not limited, outlined, located, in space. The centre and essence of the idea of personality is consciousness. That which makes me a person is that I am able to say *I*,—not that I am limited or outlined. I believe that God is personal in this sense not only, but that he is unspeakably grander than personal. God is at least equal to all that is. Whatever there is in the universe is just in so far a manifestation of this infinite life that we call God. He is at least as much, then, as anything that is manifested. The stream cannot rise higher than its source. Nothing comes from nothing. God, then, is as much as whatever appears. Personality does appear. You are persons, I am a person. We are conscious. We think, we love, we feel the infinite life and power of the universe. He is at least as much, then, as these manifestations; and it seems to me quite rational for us to take a step beyond that. It is



a little presumptuous for us to think that we are measures of the universe, that there can never have been a higher kind of being than we are. There is no reason in the nature of things why we should not suppose that there may be in this universe a being as much above what we call personality and consciousness as we are above the vegetables. God, then, is as much as personal, as much as conscious, and I believe something that we cannot imagine, yet is unspeakably more than either of these.

Now, what as to the character of God, as we think of him in the modern world? All the old dualism is being eliminated from modern thought. We are getting into a position for solving the apparent contradiction between light and darkness, good and evil, so that I think we are able to conceive of a goodness that is perfect without any contradiction, without any shadow or stain.

First, consider for a moment, in the light of the thought I have just been uttering, what we have a right to think about God's character. I said in regard to our nature as personal and conscious that we are entitled to think that God is, at least, as much as we are. On the other hand, are we not, by parity of reasoning, entitled to think that God is at least as good as we are? All human goodness, human tenderness, human compassion, human love,—what are they? Are they not simply phenomenal manifestations of God? See a mother with her wayward, reckless son. He is doing all he can to break her heart. He repays all her love and tenderness with cruelty and neglect. He is false to all the nobilities of manhood. The mother does not cease to love him. She follows him with her prayers and entreaties night and day; and, when at last she finds him a broken wreck in the hospital, she devotes herself night and day to saving the remnant of his miserable life, and buoying up his soul

with her deathless hope as he goes out towards the darkness of an unknown future. God is at least as much as that mother's love.

Picture any scene of heroism that the world has ever known. God is, at least, as much as that self-sacrifice, devotion. Whatever quality you most admire, that has been most finely and grandly illustrated by the life of any character in human life or that human fiction ever dreamed,—God is, at least, as much as these. We are, I think, in a position in this modern world to answer some of the great objections that have been brought against the Infinite Unknown with a better show of reason than they were able to in the past. John Stuart Mill, who lived just before the doctrine of evolution had taken possession of the thought of the world, said that God was manifestly an imperfect being. He either lacked power or goodness, because the world was imperfect. If he did not wish to make it better, then he was not perfect goodness. If he did wish to and could not, he was not perfect in power. But the theory of evolution, which so many people have supposed was going to be the wreck and ruin of religion, makes that objection the objection of a child. Things are now simply in process. We are able to sing with our whole hearts and souls the old hymn that tells us

“The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.”

Things are evolving, and no one has a right to judge till they are complete.

On the other hand, we are, in the light of this doctrine, to consider this life of ours as only a training school for souls. Then, all the evil, all the wrong, everything that has been a stumbling-block, that has troubled human souls in the past,

cease to be a trouble. They trouble us no more than some hard lesson troubles us as to the wisdom or goodness of the teacher who has given it to the pupil who is crying over his book.

Just one point more concerning the relation in which God stands to us. The old gulf that was supposed to exist, created by the fall of man and his sin, is no longer a part of intelligent, cultivated thought. There is no gulf; and so there is no need of any mediator, any divine being to be appointed to stand between God and men for the work of reconciling them. Not that we are done with mediators, in one sense; for in this universe, as we think of it now, all things are mediators. God comes to us through every manifestation of life and power and beauty of which we can dream. He is so near to us that that is the reason why we have lost him. Suppose you should tell a little child that you would show him the cathedral of St. Peter's. You take him blindfolded into the cathedral, place him face to face with some one of the great pillars, and ask him to open his eyes and see. The cathedral is all around him, glorious, magnificent; but he may see only some little fragment of stone, and, while in it and overshadowed by it, be wondering all the time where the grand sight was which he was to see. So God in this modern world, under the conception which we are obliged to hold, is so near to us that we lose him. If a fish should ask to see the water by getting outside the sea, would it be a reasonable request? If a bird should wish to fly beyond the limits of the atmosphere, so that it might see the air, would it be a reasonable request? God is closer to us than the air we breathe, closer to us than the thoughts we think; for he is the element in which we live and move and have our being. And if we are wise, instead of thinking of him as afar off, we shall bring him so near to us that

we shall feel we are dealing with him first-hand, every day and every moment of our lives.

He is the power that holds us up in his very arms at night while we sleep; and, when the sun's rays come in at the eastern window and touch our eyelids, it is as though God himself came in, and laid his gentle hand upon his child and told him that it was day. All the commerce and business affairs of this world are carried on through immediate, first-hand dealing with the forces of God,—not exerted at a distance, but God present, pulsing, thrilling, throbbing through all this universe. If you learn a truth, it is as though God stood close to you, and whispered into your ear one of his words. All the sublimity and glory of the world are the presence and outshining of the divine. If you hold in your hand a rose and admire its fragrance, its tinting, its beauty, God looks out of it into your face; and then you see that he is a being who loves the beauty and the joy of the world.

And so we stand in this intimate, first-hand, closest conceivable relationship to God at every moment of our lives. And, instead of one mediator, all the universe, all its millions of forms and manifestations, are just so many mediators between our souls and the divine. And he carries us in his heart as Father; he gives us training as Teacher; he comes to us to deliver us out of our evils as Saviour. He is all and unspeakably more than the world has ever dreamed of him. The hate, the cloud, the shadow,—these have fled away; and the sky is all blue and sunny, and the blue and the sunshine are the smile of our Father in heaven.

## THE FALL OF MAN.

---

My theme this morning is the Fall of Man as the explanation which the popular theology presents to us for the existence of sin and evil in the world.

We are familiar with it; and wonders lose their character, as wonders do, through familiarity. But one of the most striking characteristics of man is his possession of the ideal, — that man should be able to think, to dream, of something better than he ever saw or ever heard of. This, I say, is one of the most striking characteristics of man. If any of the lower animals should be discovered to be thinking about a better type of animal life than they represented, and we should find them restless in their desire to attain and to fulfil that type, we should straightway say that here was so striking a manifestation of another kind of life as to constitute them at once another species. It is not strange that the individual man should dream of something finer than he ever possessed, if he has heard of some other man as possessing it or if he has known that sometime, somewhere, it has existed; but that all men from the very first should have dreamed of something better than they ever saw, that is a wonder.

As early man roused himself to look out over the world, he observed everywhere suffering, disorder, wrong. The physical world presented to his mind problems which he could not solve. He was the victim of what seemed to him evil forces, which he frequently embodied as demons of the cold,

of the heat, of hunger, of disease, of pain, of pestilence, of earthquake, of death. Disorder and evil in a thousand forms faced him on every hand. At the same time, this ideal of his demanded something better than he saw; and, in the light of this ideal, he pronounced all these things evil. The problem, then, that faced him was to reconcile the existence of these evils with any faith in a good power as ruling the world. How should he understand the fact that there could be wars, that there could be cruelty, that there could be oppression, that there could be all the forms of physical and moral evil, and at the same time that the power that governed human affairs could be a good power? And here comes in the wonder of the fact of the existence of the ideal to which I have referred. How did it happen that out of all these evils, in the midst of them, should spring this thought of the good, the better, the perfect? Surely, there is something in this strange human nature of ours that transcends the realities of that which we have so far attained. But here was the problem. How, then, did primitive man attempt to solve it?

At first, it was easy enough, in one way, so long as people believed in a multiplicity of gods; for they could then suppose that there were good gods and bad gods, and that the bad gods were in conflict with the good ones, and that all the woes, evils, and sorrows were the result of these evil beings in conflict with the good. It is curious to see how long even some of the most civilized nations of antiquity were in outgrowing this sort of dualism. You are familiar with the Greek legend as to the origin of evil. Zeus himself, the supreme god, was looked upon as at enmity with mankind. He did not love men. He had come, by the death of his father, like a king inheriting a throne, to the supreme rule of the world. But he did not love the inhabi-

tants of this poor afflicted planet. Prometheus, a Titan, is represented as having championed men against the supreme power, and willingly, for the sake of that championship, enduring being chained to the mountains of Caucasus, while eagles devoured his vitals age after age. Then Zeus, as if in revenge upon Prometheus and to still further spite mankind, sends Pandora to the brother of Prometheus, Epimetheus, as his wife, and with her, in a box,—which her curiosity leads her to open,—all the ills that have since afflicted the world. Here, you see, the Greek had not outgrown that idea of the duality of the supreme power,—one attempting to injure, the other attempting to help, mankind.

But the Hebrews, at the time that we refer to, had risen to a conception of one God, and only one, as ruling the destinies of the earth. The problem faced them in a new form, presenting features of new difficulty, that the dualist and the polytheist did not have to consider. How was it possible, since there was one true, eternal, loving, just Power, who created and upheld all things, that under his rule such a condition of affairs should be found? You will notice that even the Hebrews, although they asserted their faith in one God, had not quite escaped the dualistic conception of the world; for their answer to these problems was the story of the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man. God had created this beautiful earth, everything was fair, no evil was anywhere to be found,—no death, no pain, no suffering, no sin; and more beautiful than any other part of it was Eden, where he had made a garden. Here he placed a perfect Adam and a perfect Eve. But there had long before this time been a revolt in heaven; and he who had led that revolt now invades this scene of innocence and peace and beauty, and works devastation in that which God had pronounced fair and good. This, then, was the answer that the Hebrew mind

gave to this question, how the existence of evil could consist with the goodness of the supreme God.

The doctrine of the Fall of Man is not to be ridiculed; it is not to be treated lightly, as of no moment. It was, when it came into the thought and heart of the world, a grand attempt to solve that which, even to-day, is still the greatest difficulty to one who wishes to believe in God. It was men seeking to do what Milton sought later in his wondrous poem of *Paradise Lost*,—"to justify the ways of God to men." The Hebrew was able to say, My God is all justice, all truth, all goodness, all love: only this evil being, Satan, his enemy, who revolted without cause from his just rule in heaven, comes upon the scene, and mars the glory of this creation. This seemed at that time to leave the Creator spotless, and relieve him from the responsibility of the existence of evil. And it has been held to relieve him from this responsibility for ages. Not only in the history of the Hebrews, but through the Christian centuries, it has been put forward as the divinely-revealed explanation of the entrance of sin into the world, and with it suffering and death.

Now, we must examine this a little, and see if, in the light of our modern thought, we can regard it as a satisfactory explanation. I wish to treat it with all respect, with all earnestness, with all sincerity, as what I have already declared it to be,—a noble effort of the human mind, perhaps the noblest possible in that stage of its growth. But we are brought face to face, the moment we study a question like this deeply, with this one great consideration. The moment we believe in one God, and one God only, one source of all that is, then reverently we must declare him to be responsible for whatever exists throughout the scope of his wide creation and to the utmost limit of time. He is responsible. Nothing can relieve him of that responsibility, for all that



has been, all that is, and all that shall be. If we say Satan revolted in heaven, entered the Garden of Eden, tempted and overthrew its occupants, what then? Where did Satan come from? How did he happen to be Satan? Whence in his heart the thought of rebellion and the purpose to turn against his Creator? God must be held responsible for Satan, no matter whether he ordained him or permitted him: it makes no difference in morals. The ultimate Source and Ruler of all things is responsible for whatever comes to pass. But it is said—I take up these different points as the argument shifts—that Adam was created with perfect freedom, and that he had the choice of good and evil freely placed before him, so that sufficient probation was granted him; and he has no right to find any fault with the results. But there was no possible fairness about any such probation as the story tells us of. Before Adam could stand freely, fairly, and make a choice involving such issues, he must have been endowed with intellectual power almost divine. He must have been able to forecast all the results of that choice, both for good and for evil, not only to himself, not only to his immediate children, but to all the countless throngs of his descendants from the beginning through all the ages. He must have seen what it meant, what this choice involved, not only for himself, but for myriads of other souls, before he could be competent to choose whether he would go this way or that. Even granting—there is no reason to suppose—that he was such a being as this; that he had such power of comprehension; that the future of all time was spread before him,—granting all that, even then there lies at the very threshold of this explanation an unanswerable impeachment of the divine justice. What right had Adam to decide the destiny of countless millions of souls not yet in existence? What right had God to confer

upon him the right or the power? I deny the right of any ancestor to decide my eternal destiny for me. Mark you, the point of the difficulty lies in this word "eternal." It may be consistent with justice that we should be so linked together, this human race of ours, that we should inherit nine-tenths or ninety-nine hundredths of what we are from our ancestors, provided that, through all this intricate inter-working of each upon other souls, some day we shall come out free, self-controlled, Godlike, and grand. That may be just; but that eternal evil for me should depend upon the choice of any man in any age of the past is hideous in its immorality. And the saying that God created me as so related to any ancestor does not take away the hideousness of the immorality. It only lays it at the foot of what can no longer be the great "white" throne.

Another answer, or attempt at answer, that has often been made is that, though thousands and millions of souls will be lost as the result of the evil, yet the age is coming when the countless millions that are to be born will not be lost, so that the final summing up will show that the number of the lost, as compared with the number of the saved, will be so small as hardly to be worth taking into account. Men have thought they evaded the difficulty by presenting that idea. But consider one moment. There is no possible relation of justice between these two phases of the question, of balancing the number of the saved and the number of the lost. How can the songs of the millions of souls in heaven balance in the scales of justice the infinite pain of one other soul that is lost? How can injustice to this one be balanced by unspeakable good to that? There is no sort of relation between the two ideas: it is only confusion of thought that ever suggests such an attempt to evade the difficulty.

Substantially the same argument lies again in another at-

tempt. Elaborate works have been written in vindication of this idea : that possibly this one world of ours is the only one in the universe where evil exists. God, as it were, has built this earth as a stage ; and here a grand moral drama is being enacted. Uncounted myriads of inhabitants, in other worlds and other planets, are supposed to be looking on, or at any rate to get reports of what is going on here ; and in that way they are being taught the value of good and the infinite sin of that which is wrong. They are being taught this by what is going on here, so that they do not need to go through the process themselves. According to this idea, this human life of ours constitutes an eternal object lesson for the instruction of other worlds. Here, again, you will see precisely the same objection lies against this as against the other idea. What right have the inhabitants of other planets to learn the evil of sin and the blessedness of good by witnessing my soul torture and the horrors of my downward darkening destiny? What right has infinite Goodness to set me up for an example to all the ages,—me no more guilty, to say the least, than any other soul arbitrarily so chosen for the good of others? And what can the goodness of others be who are willing so to be taught? If there were in them anything of the spirit that was in Jesus when he walked this earth, they would come and drown out hell with a flood of tears, or even choose to enter it themselves, rather than learn the nature of evil by seeing the torture of another soul.

Another explanation has been given, which, if possible, is more immoral than either of these ; and yet it is that which essentially lies at the bottom of Calvinism,—the whole theory of foreordination. Some one asked the once famous Dr. Gardner Spring, of the Old Brick Church in New York, why he supposed it was that God did not save more souls than he did. Dr. Spring frankly replied that he presumed he

saved precisely the number that he desired to save. That is Calvinism. God foreordained that a certain number should be saved, in illustration of his mercy, his kindness, his goodness. He foreordained that a certain number should be lost, as an illustration of his infinite justice. That is, he is declared by Calvinism to be the infinite, incarnate selfishness of the universe, the pleasures and the pains of others only illustrating qualities of his own being. Turn it however we may, there is no possibility of evading the fact that the "Fall of Man" to-day, in the light of our present intelligence and of the development of our moral ideal, instead of removing the difficulty, only constitutes a fresh and a greater one. It is a greater moral difficulty than that which it attempts to explain for us.

Furthermore, we have learned in this modern world that there is not a shred of reason for believing that anything of the kind ever happened anyway. It is curious to note that there are two parallel traditions running through the Hebrew. One of them, and that the older, is given by the prophets who spoke and wrote before the exile, and who represent the oldest part of the Old Testament, that first written, and who say nothing whatever of any Fall. The golden age which they so longingly picture is always in the future. As a matter of fact, then, brought out as the result of the best modern criticism, there is hardly a question that the early Jews were ignorant of this story. They probably picked it up from the Persians during the exile, and engrafted it upon their older and higher thought. And I have reminded you more than once that Jesus himself, though he must have been familiar with it, evidently did not regard it as being of any importance; for he never makes the slightest allusion to it. He never speaks of man as being in a fallen state, in the theological sense of the word, or of his need of being saved, in the theological sense of the word.

Not only is there no proof of the truth of the story, but there is demonstrative proof, springing out of our knowledge of the antiquity of the world and the origin and nature of man, of the precise contrary. If we are intelligent, we no longer talk about the Fall of Man. We talk rather of the rise of man. For, while there is no proof that he has ever fallen, there is a large amount of proof, amounting to practical demonstration, that he has been rising from the very beginning, and that he is rising still to-day. We turn the problem completely round in the light of our modern knowledge; and, instead of talking about the origin of evil, we talk about the origin of good,—not how did evil, as though it were a thing, come into the world, but how, out of the primeval condition of things, did it come to be that man was developed into a moral being. That is the way we treat the problem to-day.

Consider for a moment. At first, the whole world was only the scene of the gigantic play of physical forces. There was no life anywhere on the planet. Then from the ooze of the primeval ocean and on its shores appeared the lowest forms of life; and age after age these forms developed, ever rising, till animal life covered all the earth, and bird life filled the sky. But there is nothing to be thought of as moral on the face of the earth. All this gigantic play of animal powers and passions; what now, if it were visible on the part of man, would be called cruelty, that scene of rapine which Tennyson speaks of when he talks of nature being “red in tooth and claw,”—all this existed, indeed; but we may not think that the world was all rapine. If we look dispassionately over the extent of the animal world to-day, we shall be compelled to treat cruelty and ferocity as merely incidental. The larger part of the life that flies in the air and swims in the sea and roams through the forest, if we are frank and

honest, we must consider to be happy animal life, thrilling with all the enjoyment of which it possesses the capacity. If I had time, I think I could show you clearly that the process of suffering through which it passes on its way to death is less under the present condition of things than it might be under some other that has been fancied as an improvement on it.

After the animal world there appears man, and with man for the first time the moral ideal, the existence of this dream of the better, this contrast of himself with his dream, and his condemnation of himself because he does not fulfil the dream. Morality, then, is born with man on this planet, out of this crude, pre-existing condition of things,—born naturally as the companion of sin. There is a strange thing about this, and yet a perfectly rational thing, if we look at it with candor and care.

Did you ever think that in a race of beings possessing no ideal, dreaming of nothing better than themselves, and with no capacity for progress, there could be no sin? Sin means the gulf between the actual and the ideal. It means condemnation of ourselves as coming short of the dream. Take that away, and there could be no sin. The existence, then, of sin, the existence of man's consciousness of it, his desire to escape from it and rise up into better conditions,—this is the grandest, the most hopeful fact in human nature. Instead, then, of the consciousness of sin being a sign of the Fall, it is a sign, on the other hand,—the absolutely necessary accompaniment of the fact,—of the possibility of rising. And by as much as man does rise higher and higher, so ever deeper and deeper grows his consciousness of sin. So ever does he become more sensitive to it, so ever does he bear it with less and less patience, so ever does he seek more ardently to escape from it. This deepening of the



consciousness of sin then, instead of its proving that man is all wrong, proves that he is all right.

One grand testimony to the moral sanity and healthfulness of this race lies in the fact that never, from the beginning of the world, has any man been canonized by the popular heart as a hero and helper to the world except he were, in the light of the best ideal that could be attained at the time, a good man. There are no evil saints. That which men have worshipped, that which they have consecrated, that which they have bowed down to, that which they have loved, that which they have clasped to their hearts, has always been the good. And yet men talk about human nature being essentially evil, about men having no natural taste for goodness or tendency towards it. It has been the business of the old theologians for ages to prove to men over and over again how bad they were, in order that they might induce them to submit to their methods of being saved. The majority of men are not bad. The great masses of men the world over, in all time, according to the light they have had, have done so grandly well that I find myself, as I read history and study human progress, feeling like bowing down to them in reverence. The existence of sin, then,—the existence of this consciousness of sin, the existence of this moral ideal that forever outruns us,—is that which proves the divinity within us, that there is a possibility of rising towards that which has not yet been attained.

Note, in another way, how this fact of sin springs out of the fact of human progress. There have been three stages, roughly speaking, in human advance. In the lower levels of human life, in the early, primitive ages of the world, brute force was dominant, the most important force there was. The man who was a muscular king was the mightiest and most important, and might, for the time being, be

the best man of his age. But, after a while, the force of evolution seems to pass by the physical. These physical forms of ours have not been evolved to so high an extent as have some of those that we speak of as belonging to the animal world. The force of evolution passed by our bodies, and there is not much probability of our being developed farther physically. It seized the brain, and is working towards the evolution of man's mental power. At first, it was merely the force of cunning, keenness, sharpness, outwitting the foes of those primitive times,—surpassing them, not by superior muscular power, but by superior cunning. This made man inventive. With bare hands, possessing no claws, no weapons of self-defence, in process of time he tore the limb from the tree, sharpened it into a spear, invented the bow and arrow; and so cunning and brain power became master of the world.

The next step hastens on the development of man as a moral being. Until to-day, even in the politics of Europe, though the nations are armed to the teeth and face each other like thirsty tigers, ready to suck each other's blood,—even here there is a dominant moral power, mightier than their armaments. There is no nation in Europe to-day that dares transgress, beyond certain limits, the moral laws of its relation to other nations, lest all the rest of the civilized world be on its back. The moral power is to-day supreme. Note what comes, then. As man progresses, as the human race goes on, it is like an army on the march. There is always a vanguard, always a main body, always the stragglers and camp followers. That which was right enough on a lower physical plane becomes out of place and wrong on a higher intellectual plane; and that which was right enough on the intellectual level becomes relatively wrong on the higher moral level of human nature.



As an illustration of what I mean, war was right once. It was the best thing the people knew of at the time ; but war to-day is recognized as an evil, to be permitted only in case of absolute necessity, as a choice between two evils, one of which must be taken. Polygamy was once right. To-day, it is wrong. Slavery was once right, relatively to the time. To-day, the civilized sense of the world condemns it as, what John Wesley called it, "the sum of all villanies." Thus, as humanity rises, things which were relatively right on the lower plane become out of place and wrong on the higher plane, so that the very evils of our civilized world as we go on are actually created by our progress. There is no possibility of such a thing as sin or wrong in the world, in itself. The science of the world and the philosophy of the world used to be full of metaphysical entities. Electricity, for example, used to be supposed to be a thing. People still talk about the "electric fluid" or the "electric current." Heat was a thing; and the old science had a great deal to say of phlogiston, a sort of principle or essence of heat. Light was another entity ; force was another. But now we are by all that. We know that heat, light, electricity, all these tremendous forces of the world, are only modes of motion, modes of activity. So good is not a thing. Evil is not a thing. There is no entity called sin that got into this world after it was created. Good,—what is it? It is that type of thought, feeling, action, which helps somebody. What is evil? It is that type of thought, that type of feeling, that type of action, which injures, takes away from the sum total of the welfare and happiness of mankind. There is no such thing, then, as good or evil in itself.

The only possible way by which men can do wrong is by one of these three ways. Evil must be the perversion of something which is right, the perverted use of any faculty

or power which might as well be used in the right direction; the excessive use of some power or faculty which in another use might be right; or something which might be right somewhere else, but which is misplaced.

The daisy, for example, is a flower which all poets love. But, when it gets among the wheat, the farmers call it white-weed; and it is one of the greatest nuisances for one who has to contend against it. A thousand things, beautiful and good in their places, become evil when misplaced, when perverted, or when carried to excess.

I have in my hand a list of the seven deadly sins of the Catholic Church. They are pride, idleness, envy, murder, covetousness, lust, gluttony. There is not a single one of them that does not spring out of, or have its root in, something which is not only innocent, but which may be grandly good. Pride is only a perverted and excessive self-respect. A right and manly pride belongs to any true manhood. Idleness — whether it is right or wrong depends on circumstances. Envy is only the admiration of something possessed by another person, turned into spite against him because he possesses it and we do not. Covetousness is what might be right otherwise, a desire to possess something held by another, perverted into a willingness to get it by harming him. Lust springs out of that which is the root of all the fairest and most beautiful things of human life. Gluttony is only an excess of that which is necessary to human existence.

And now let me give you still further illustrations of this threefold classification of wrong-doing that I have referred to.

Take, as an illustration, the evils of things misplaced. Charity, I will say in passing, may be an evil, springing out of ever so generous a heart. If it is misplaced, it may

only lead to the cultivation of mendicancy instead of diminishing it.

As a concrete illustration, take a figure like John L. Sullivan, who is a magnificent animal. The only trouble with him is that he is wholly out of place. Put him back a few thousand years, and he has in him the stuff of which to make a hero, the subject of some epic. Suppose he had led a crusade for the recovery of the tomb of Jesus from the hands of the infidels: he might have figured to-day in the calendar of saints. This mighty physical prowess and power, in the days when muscle was at the front, would have made him a natural leader. The only difficulty is that there is now no legitimate call for this superfluity of muscle. Brain and moral power have superseded it. It is of no use. In war, he could not handle a rifle any better than a smaller man, and would only make a larger target for the enemy. He is a survival from a time when the animal was supreme; and he now, as the poet says, "lags superfluous on the stage."

Take a case like that of Daniel Webster, who sacrificed his moral ideal to his ambition. Ambition is right, though Milton calls fame "that last infirmity of noble mind." It belongs to noble minds; and it is only evil when it is turned in the wrong direction or when one is willing to sacrifice something noble to attain it. Look at Napoleon as another instance.

Take an illustration of that which is right in one way, but may be carried to excess. You know my opinion, that the accumulation of money and the aggregation of capital lie at the very root of our best civilization. Suppose a man, conscious of that fact, devotes himself to money-making, turns all his powers in that direction, and succeeds. But he sacrifices everything else to that; and he carries it so far that he loses sight of the rights of others, loses sight of the wel-

fare of the poor, whom he grinds down by diminishing their wages that he may add to his own accumulation. He carries this quality, this power, which is absolutely necessary to the civilization of the world, to excess; and it becomes a tremendous evil, dwarfing his own soul and injuring thousands of victims. But the faculty is not only right, it is necessary to the growth of the world.

And so, in all directions, evil is the sign of the growth, of the progress, of man; and the only thing that we need to do, in order to "vindicate the ways of God to man," is to see, beyond this process of training through experience, where evil is necessary to the cultivation of a moral, self-possessed, self-controlled soul,—to see that evil, at least in the case of every individual soul, is a transient phase of its development that it passes through and out of. Evil may exist forever, and be no impeachment of God's goodness. It may exist on this planet forever, as a school-house might exist forever, if you do not keep the pupils always in it. Only let them graduate when they are ready. Let individual souls pass through the curriculum, and emerge grandly developed and in the image of God.

## REDEMPTION OR EDUCATION?

---

ALTHOUGH we have come to the conclusion, as the result of our previous studies, that man is not in a fallen condition, not under the curse and wrath of God, still we must assume that theory, or keep it in mind rather, for the purpose that we have in view this morning, at least during the opening part of our discussion. In order that we may understand the scheme of redemption that has been proposed as a means of delivering men from this condition, we must of course have this condition in mind.

This plan of redemption has been held as a signal illustration both of the love and of the wisdom of God ; and I shall ask you to look at it with me for a little while from these two points of view,—first, as illustrating the supposed love of God for fallen men.

You will need to note, what I have already pointed out and made clear to you, that, in order to make this view in the least degree reasonable, we must assume a dualistic conception of the governing force of this world. If God is not to be held responsible in any degree for the entrance of sin into the world ; if he is not responsible for the fallen condition of the race ; if he is not responsible for the loss and for the hopeless destiny that overhang the larger part of all souls,—then, indeed, we may reasonably talk about the love and grace that devised a plan by which at least some of them may be saved. But, in order that we may hold this view, we must

suppose that there existed some other power in the universe, some power, evil in nature and in purpose, that, in spite of God, wrought this ruin and devastation; and this means something besides a perfect, clear, consistent unity in the nature of God and his government of the world. For, if he be the one, only, sole source of all that ever has been, of all that is, and of all that ever shall be, then we must, as I have already told you, hold him responsible for the ruin as well as for the salvation.

Let me intimate to you what I think of this theory of his love and mercy by one or two illustrations.

Suppose a king should colonize an island a long way from the borders of his own kingdom; that he should send a certain number of his subjects there, and leave them to develop and populate this island. Suppose he should know beforehand that in the course of years diseases of all sorts would rise and spread their devastation among these inhabitants, or that a great famine would come upon them,—a famine that they would be powerless to oppose or escape,—and that by its ravages the larger number of the people would in time be destroyed; yet he should send them. Suppose that after this famine came he allowed months to pass, till great numbers had perished, and then should organize an expedition of relief, sending ships to carry food to those that were perishing; that he should be willing to rescue those that desired to return, or should at least allow a certain number of them to be fed, to be saved, to be carried back to their homes once more, if they so desired.

Suppose, on the other hand, that he should leave some in ignorance that any food or supplies had been sent, and should suffer them to die lingering and painful deaths one after another. Suppose he should select only a few to whom the offer of return might be made, and should leave the

larger number of them in entire ignorance of any such scheme of deliverance having been devised. What would you say of such a thing as this? How would you characterize such a course of action, such a method of government, such a way of dealing with his subjects, on the part of a human king? Instead of praising him for his mercy to a few, instead of praising him for sending out his expedition of relief, for saving a few from dying of hunger, instead of praising him for offering that at least a few may return if they so choose, would you not say that his course of conduct from beginning to end, in spite of this temporary and local mercy, was unspeakably infamous? If the island had been colonized by some other king, if these people had been no subjects of his, if he had been in no sense responsible for their being there or for the condition into which they had fallen, and then he had organized an expedition for their salvation, though he had succeeded in saving only a few, then we would exhaust the resources of language in praising him for his care, his loving-kindness, his tender mercy.

But on the theory that has been offered us, the one that is supposed by all the terms of the scheme, the salvation that is still printed in the popular creeds of the churches, God is responsible from first to last. He created this world and its inhabitants, and placed them here and knew what was to be. Even by the terms of common law as we deal with our fellow-citizens in this world,—and our standards are none too clear and none too high,—we hold any man responsible for causes which he sets in motion, even though he do not intend the result. If a man chooses to set fire to his own house, we may question his moral right to do it,—to destroy any property that is the result of the world's effort to deliver itself from want and suffering; but he at least has a legal right to burn his own house to the ground,

if he chooses. But if, as the result of this attempt, he burns his neighbor's, we hold him responsible, though he did not intend it. Shall we apply a less lofty standard of justice to God than we apply to our fellow-men? May we not reverently ask in the words of Scripture, Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

It seems to me, then, that all this talk of mercy, tenderness, loving-kindness, of self-sacrificing devotion to the wants, the sorrows, the sufferings of men, is entirely out of place. Rather must we feel our hearts burn within us with indignation at such a conception of God as is offered to us. And, by as much as we are true and noble men, we shall find it not only impossible to worship such a being, but to believe that he exists. That he foreordained, created, intended all this it is impossible that we should believe.

I remember one illustration bearing on this point that old Prof. Park, of Andover, used to offer as an attempt to relieve God from this sort of responsibility. He said: Suppose a man has hired a servant, and during some cold winter night some member of the family is suddenly taken ill. He wakes up this servant, and orders him to go for a physician; but the servant, angry at being so disturbed and being called upon to render such an unusual service, indulges in the wickedness of profanity and wrath. The professor used complacently to ask, Is the man who simply requires this duty, who demands this service, on the part of one who is bound to be his servant,—is he responsible for the sin which the servant incidentally commits, because the service is disagreeable to him? And I remember that one of the students, on a certain occasion, raised the question, which neither the professor nor any other has ever answered, and which cannot be answered: But suppose the man had created the servant, and had endowed him with such a nature



and disposition that he knew when he created him that, if he placed him in this peculiar circumstance, he would inevitably commit this sin; then what? The old theologians told us that God did not foreordain the sin, but that he so created and so circumstanced man that he would inevitably fall when the temptation was presented to him. Can any one in morals draw a line of distinction, so that God shall be relieved of the responsibility in the one case any more than in the other? So much for the supposed love and mercy embodied in this scheme of redemption.

Let us now look at its wisdom. I propose to outline a few of the many theories of the atonement that have been held, that you may see under what plan it is supposed God has arranged to redeem man from his lost and fallen condition.

You are well aware that it is supposed to be the result of the birth and life and sufferings and death of Christ, who, on this supposition, is the second person in the eternal trinity. But how is this supposed to produce the result? There have been a great many theories held. I shall only call your attention to three or four of the most important, and ask you to see if you can discern the wisdom or the justice supposed to be here displayed.

At first, and for a great many years, for some centuries at least, the popular theory was something like this: Satan was supposed to have become the rightful ruler of humanity. He had incited man to rebellion, and had gained control of this earthly province of God's kingdom. According to the theories of government that used to be held, any king who was powerful enough to conquer and to hold another province was supposed to be its rightful possessor; for might and right in those days were interchangeable terms. Under this theory of the atonement, Satan was the rightful owner and ruler of all human souls. It was supposed, then, that

God entered into a sort of bargain with Satan, as though he were an adversary with whom he could treat, and offered him the sufferings and death of Jesus in exchange for so many of the souls of this earthly province as were thus to be saved. So that Jesus' death was simply a price paid to Satan for the deliverance of a certain number of his subjects. When Jesus descended into hell, after his crucifixion, it was supposed by Satan that he had gained eternal possession of this superior being, who used to be his old adversary in heaven. For on that theory the conflict in heaven, during the time of the rebellion there, was between Jesus, the leader on one side, and Satan, the leader on the other. Satan supposed that he had Jesus in his grasp, so that he could keep him; and he was willing, for this dear revenge, to release a certain number of the souls of men that had come into his possession. But Satan was deceived as to the nature of Jesus. He supposed him to be a created being. He did not know that he was divine. But since he was divine, was a part of the being of God himself, it was impossible, as the New Testament says, "that he should be holden of death." It was impossible that any power of the adversary should keep him. So, at the end of the three days, he broke loose from the bondage in which he had been kept, and ascended on high, leading in his train a large number of those who had been kept in prison since their death, under the old dispensation. This is one theory.

After this came the great theory that has been called the expiatory theory of the atonement. It was supposed that it was impossible for God to forgive unless there was a certain amount of suffering paid on the part of somebody, an equivalent for the suffering that would have been endured by the souls of men, supposing they had been lost through all eternity. God was regarded as a being who possessed an attri-

bute called justice, that must in this way be satisfied before he could forgive anybody. Jesus, then, being infinite, a part of God himself, and capable therefore of infinite suffering, even in a limited time, was supposed to have gone through so much of pain and sorrow while he was in the lower regions as to precisely offset all the pain that all the lost would have suffered through eternity,—that is, so many of them as God had decided to save. This is the theory that is still sung in Moody and Sankey meetings: “Jesus died and paid it all, all the debt I owe.”

But think for a moment: what kind of a conception of justice could men hold who supposed that so much wrong could be measured or weighed against just so much pain, and that when somebody has suffered just this amount of pain, no matter whether it is the wrong-doer or not, he can be righteously set free?

In the first place, to the enlightened conscience and clear thought there is no sort of relation between sin on the one hand and suffering on the other, even though it be the suffering of the guilty one. Suppose a man has committed a murder: does exacting so much pain from him take away the fact of the murder? Does it relieve the broken hearts of the friends? Does it change or lessen one iota of the guilt? It does not touch it: it stands in no sort of rational or vital relation with it in any way whatever. But how much worse is the case when the pain is exacted from some one who has not committed the murder! And what can one think of what is called the Supreme Justice of the universe being willing to take, as an equivalent for the sins of man, the suffering of anybody who will voluntarily bear it?

The next theory is what has been called the governmental theory of the atonement. This is the one that has been for years a part of our New England theology, that used to be

taught at Andover before the new movement there. It is the theory of Prof. Park. It holds that God, as moral governor of the world, cannot possibly overlook wrong-doing, that he must make an example of the sinner, that there is something more important even than saving any particular sinner; and that is, letting the universe know that God's laws cannot be broken with impunity. The government of God is degraded by comparing it with our common human devices. If the authorities of the city of Boston should let criminals run loose without attempting to restrain them, anarchy and chaos would be the result. So they say that God is reduced to such methods as this, to maintain the supremacy of his own kingdom. One favorite illustration of Prof. Park as to the way in which God upheld his justice is this. He used to tell the story of a king who made a certain law, and said that, if anybody broke that law, both his eyes should be put out as a penalty. The first one to break the law was his own son. The king must maintain the supremacy of his own law, or his government would be held in contempt. But he did not like to make his own son totally blind. So he devised a method by which he could escape this penalty by having one of his son's eyes put out, and one of his own. So the law was supposed to be upheld and justice to be maintained. But what kind of justice is that which, for the breach of a certain law, demands that two eyes shall be paid as a penalty, but that is not very particular as to whose they are, provided the number is maintained? To such devices as this, that seem pitiful, that seem intellectually contemptible, that seem morally infamous, has popular theology been reduced, in order to uphold this scheme for the redemption of mankind from sin.

Another theory I must touch upon, because it shows such development on the part of the conscience of the world, such a growth of the tenderness of the human heart, such a shad-

ing off towards that simple and pure naturalism which must come by and by. It goes by the name of Dr. Bushnell, of Hartford, Conn. He says that the sufferings and death of Christ are simply the manifestation of the love of God for his children and of his sense of the evil of wrong-doing, and are intended to impress the thought and heart of the world with these two ideas, and so lead people to forsake the wrong, and love and reverence that which is right. I am perfectly willing to admit the justice of this theory: only it gives up the whole question, because, if you admit that the only thing necessary to do is to touch the hearts of men and lift them out of evil into the love of right, then every man from the beginning of the world who has illustrated in his life and in his character devotion to that which is right, all the teachers, all the saviors, all the martyrs, have had their proportional share in working out the world's atonement for its sins, in bringing them into reconciliation with God, so that it is no longer peculiar to the work of Jesus, but is shared in by all those who have manifested a similar spirit of love for God and man, and devotion to the truth.

I am now ready to ask you to turn squarely round, and face what seems to me to be the need of men. I do not believe he needs to be redeemed in the sense in which we have been speaking. What man needs is education. Do not misunderstand me. Do not confine your thought to that popular but most shallow idea of what education means,—the simple imparting of information to people, the storing of their minds with facts, teaching them correct theories about themselves and the world. This is part of education; but, while it is the first in order of time, it is perhaps the least in order of importance. Man needs education in the sense that his faculties and powers need to be trained, developed. He needs to be made, in other words, a complete

man,—complete in body, complete in brain, complete in heart, complete in spirit. He needs to be developed along those lines that the human race has been following from the first. We need to apply to man's present condition and to his future development just the same kind of intelligence, of choice, of direction, that we employ in hastening the natural processes of development in any other department of life. There has been an enormous development since the beginning of the world in fruit trees, for example. The process of natural selection has been going on,—poor species have been dying, and better taking their place. But the larger part of the development which has been attained has been the result of intelligent selection on the part of man, the result of purpose in the light of the knowledge of the forces at work and how they could be controlled and directed. The same intelligence, the same choice, the same purpose, need to be applied to human development; and if the world would only turn all its thought, its enthusiasm, its money, its time, its resources, in this direction, results might be attained in a hundred years that will take millenniums to reach if we leave things to what we call the natural order of events,—that is, the natural order, with human intelligence, human purpose and guidance left out.

I wish to speak of this matter of education in three different directions. In the first place, the race needs to be educated, to be taught the truth concerning itself. We need to know what sort of beings we are, what is our origin, what our nature, what the lines of our development up to the present time, what the possibilities of progress, what things help, what things hinder. The wisdom of that old Greek saying, "Know thyself," needs to be fathomed. For consider in the first place the immense waste of our present method, I was going to say: I must say, rather, our lack of

method. Think of the immense waste of thought, of time, of money, of enthusiasm, of effort, of aspiration, of worship, from our present lack of system.

I was reading only to-day in one of the morning papers something that recalled to me what I have long known concerning certain of the barbarous tribes of the world and their ideas of religion. They are fetich worshippers. They believe that everything that happens, especially anything that injures and that they call evil, is the work of some wizard,—that some man or woman in the tribe is at the bottom of all the mischief that occurs. If there is a devastating storm, if one of their cabins is struck by lightning, if anything occurs of untoward significance, they try to find out what member of the tribe is responsible; and there is no rest or peace until he is put to a cruel death. But all the time there is not one effort made to find out the real cause of the real evils under which they suffer. All the efforts of the tribe are misdirected by superstition towards some false cause instead of a true one. So there is no progress, no growth, except a development in cruelty and superstition.

Then look all over the world: think of the temples, the altars, the shrines; think of the prayers lifted up, think of the efforts that have been made; think of the heartache, the longings, the tears, all directed towards some false conception of God, all distorted by some false theory of man, having no tendency to deliver the race from the real evils that are keeping it down, no real power to lift up and lead on towards some grander ideal of which man forever must dream. Think of the wasted efforts of all these Christian centuries in trying to placate a God that never existed, in trying to save a man that never was from a condition of evil into which he had never fallen. And then think where we might have been to-day, if intelligent guidance had been at work

in trying to remove the real evils under which the world has been suffering.

It seems to me that one lesson of all this ought to come home to the hearts of us who call ourselves intelligent Unitarians. I believe that the services, the books, the sermons, the pamphlets, the teachings, of all Unitarians ought to be forever rid of every shred of these old and utterly unfounded theories of God, of man, and of salvation. Half our churches are praying every Sunday as though this or something very like it were true. They are reading Scripture lessons that imply it. They are letting their choirs sing it. They are teaching it or admitting it by implication almost every Sunday in the year; and yet, if you ask any one of them to think of this, if you put the question clearly and plainly, they will tell you they do not believe it. Then let us at least, who see the way, do what we can to help clear the path, so that the weak feet of the race may not stumble over imaginary obstacles. Let us rouse ourselves to face the real universe, the real God, whom we can so love and reverence and worship. Let us face the real men and the real problems of destiny, and help men to a real deliverance. We need, then, first to learn what are the facts concerning ourselves and our constitution.

The next point about which we need to be educated is concerning the development of our moral ideal, of our knowledge of morality. Our consciences need more and more to be quickened, to be made sensitive, but not to be made diseased, not to be distorted, not to be made to grieve over unrealities. The consciences of most men and women are like compasses, the needles of which are turned from the true north by being in relation with something that has power to draw them one side. We need to find out what are the real sins and the real virtues of the world.



Let me give you one or two illustrations of what I mean. I think that at least half of the burdened consciences of men and women up to the present time, from the beginning of the world, have been burdened by a sense of sins which they never committed, things which were no sins. At the same time, they have been committing things which were really sins with no sense of having done wrong at all. People need to be educated out of the conventional distinctions of right and wrong, and taught what are the real and true distinctions, so that they may avoid harming their fellow-men while they think they are serving God. For example, you will find a great many people whose consciences will not trouble them at all for driving Sunday afternoon, who would be conscience-burdened if they went to sail. In one case they are wearing out the strength of some animal, while in the other case they are not. If there is any distinction in ethics, it would certainly be in favor of sailing as against driving. Then how large a part of the world would be conscience-stricken and burdened by eating meat on Friday! How many are there who would be troubled and think they had committed some great sin if they should eat certain kinds of meat on any day in the week! How many persons will not ride in the horse-cars on Sunday, yet can be bitter and hard in their judgments concerning somebody who differs from them in opinion! You will find that the greater part of the men and women of the world are so little educated morally as yet that they are perpetually making these false distinctions. They allow their consciences to be troubled over things that do not harm anybody; while without one twinge of conscience they are lessening the amount of happiness, the true welfare, the real life and growth, of men and women.

What is wrong? What is right? Anything is wrong, may

be wrong to-day, may have been last year, may be wrong next year, and yet under certain conditions may not be, which at the time injures some other life, takes away from the sum total of his happiness, takes away from his welfare, makes it harder for that person to live and bear his burdens. Anything is wrong that injures mankind, and anything that does not is right. This is the real distinction. That which the human race has discovered by its long process of experience to be for the health, the happiness, and general welfare of the world, this is the thing to call right; and anything which does not injure the world is at least innocent. The world needs then to be educated in regard to these distinctions so that its efforts may be turned in the right direction. And the sense of right and wrong needs to be made more tender, more sensitive, more delicate.

And how shall this be brought about? It cannot be by any direct means. You quicken any faculty only as you legitimately use it. So you can quicken your conscience, develop your sense of right and wrong, only as you attempt to train it in such a way that it shall make for you clear and fine and real distinctions. One of the most important roots of conscience is sympathy. Thousands of people are cruel and hard, working wrong to their neighbors, neglecting that which they ought to do for their fellow-men, because they have no development of imaginative sympathy by which they are able to put themselves in the place of others, and think how they would feel and what they would desire under such and such conditions. We need then to develop this power of sympathy; and we need to learn that that which is for the welfare of all the world must in the long run be for the welfare of the individual, and that which is for the true welfare of the individual must in the long run be for the welfare of all. There is no contradiction in

ethics. This race of ours is all bound together in one, so that we must perforce go up or down together.

In one other direction our race needs to be educated. We need religious education. And what do I mean by that? I mean that we need to be waked up to the fact, which is the essential fact of all life, that we are souls; that we are children of the one, infinite Soul and Life of all, and that true life for all of us means sympathetic, vital relationship with this infinite Soul; that our lives are hid in God, and that only there can we find them. But we need to learn that we are not to go out of our business or out of our common working affairs, out of our common relationships with each other, in order to find God. For this infinite Spirit and Life is manifested in every phase of the natural world about us and in the sum total of human life of which we are a part. Nothing is so wild an absurdity as that which has been the thought of most of the religions of the past, that which Jesus himself condemned so earnestly, that any man can ever be in right relation to God when he is not in right relation to his fellow-man.

What do I mean by getting in right relation to God? So far as he is manifested in the universe about us, it means recognizing the laws of the universe and coming into perfect harmony and accord with them; and we know that this means health, peace, life, joy. It means, furthermore, so far as our relations to our fellows are concerned, recognizing that it is God's vital, throbbing presence into which we come, face to face, as we deal with our fellow-men, and that just in so far as we treat them justly, tenderly, reverently, lovingly, just in so far do we become like God, come into harmony with him, become reconciled to him. There is no other way. We are to learn that we love God, whether we call him by name or not, just in so far as we love that which is worthy of our love,

no matter whether it be beneath or round or above us; that we worship God whenever we appreciate and admire anything that is noble, uplifting, that is above us, and that tends to draw us into a higher thought of life; that we serve God not necessarily by praying or Bible reading or church attendance, or anything that goes under the name of religion, but that we serve him only as we become like him, and that this is the only service that can ever be acceptable in his sight.

What, then, is the value of that which, up to the present time, has gone under the name of religion? What is the value of the temple, the church, the altar, the sacrifice, the Bible, the prayer, the hymn, the ritual, the sacrament? Have they no value? That depends. If we substitute them for the true religion of life and thought and love every day in the week and in every relation of life, then they not only become useless, but pernicious, as standing in the way of that which they are intended to serve. If they do not help us, then they are of no use to us, though they may not harm. If they do help us, if church or Bible, prayer or hymn or sacrament, anything that passes under the name of religious rite or ceremonial, if they quicken the conscience, if they fire the heart, if they lift the aspiration, if they bring us nearer to God, if they bring us in closer sympathetic relation to our fellow-men, if they help us to develop the real religious life, then they are grand, they are stepping-stones by which to climb. But let us never forget that this, and this alone, is what they are for. We should test them always by the power they have to help and to inspire.

This, then, is what this race of ours needs. We have come up from the world below us. There are still in us, in body, in mind, in heart, in spirit, remnants, traces, survivals, of that which is lowest clinging to us and hindering our way.

Our minds are clouded still with the shadows that used to be the deep night of all the world. Our instincts, our tastes, our hearts, are perverted; and we need to be helped to outgrow that which is low, which is evil, in us. We need to come out into the light, and to become masters of ourselves, masters of our conditions, makers of our destiny, as free, loving children of God. Education, and not redemption, is what the world needs.

## JESUS.

---

I WISH to begin by telling you that it is with a profound feeling of responsibility that I undertake the discussion of a question like this. Do not think that I utter any, even the least, word lightly. I appreciate, I think, to the full what it means to lay upon my soul the responsibility of shaping, moulding, possibly changing, the opinions of others concerning subjects which are regarded as of such vital import as this. I shall give you only the result of my most earnest conviction, of my most careful thought. If I mistake in any point, no one in all the world more wishes to be set right. And let me tell you in one word more the attitude of my own soul to-day towards Jesus of Nazareth. You know well that I do not think him God; but never in all my life did I so reverence him, never in all my life did I so look up to him, never in all my life had I a feeling of such personal tenderness and fellowship towards him as now. And this comes, as it seems to me, of the changed conception which has passed over my own mind concerning his origin, his nature, his character, and the service he has rendered men.

I shall have to treat so great a theme as this in broad outlines. It is impossible in the time allotted me that I should go into details. I shall very likely leave out many things that you would like to have treated, but I shall try to touch those points that seem to me most vital. I wish to consider Jesus under a threefold aspect,—as to his history, his nature

and character, and what he has done for men ; and these three again in a twofold way,—from the point of view of the old faith, and then from the stand-point which I occupy to-day. I say “I” advisedly, and not “we.” For, while I believe that the position I hold represents in the main that of the best and freest Unitarian thought, I do not wish to assume the responsibility of implicating any other single person in any position which I shall state as being mine.

According to the orthodox belief, we cannot speak of the “origin” of Jesus ; for, being the second person in the divine and eternal Trinity, he had no origin. Some of the older theologians speak of the Trinity as existing before the worlds were made in such a way that, while it was only one God, there were still three personalities who could have relations with each other ; so that they refer sometimes to the mutual love, the fellowship, of these divine personalities, in the one God. They speak of the councils of this Trinity : how they planned the foundation of the world, the creation of man ; how they ordained man’s fall ; how they laid out the scheme of redemption by which the elect were to be delivered from the results of that fall. According to this belief, in the fulness of time, at a specific point in the history of the world, this second person in the Trinity, having been prophesied for many centuries, having been heralded at last by angelic couriers, not only singing their song in the heavens at the time of his advent, but forewarning both father and mother that such a being was to be born, comes through the gateway of a supernatural birth, with no human father, a divine wonder-child. Born, according to prophecy, in the little town of Bethlehem in Judea, he moved with his father to make his home in the hill country of Nazareth, towards the north in Galilee. We know nothing about his childhood, except the fact of his being presented according to Jewish custom at the

temple at the age of twelve. When he is about thirty years of age, he makes his appearance to John the Baptist, who was baptizing in the Jordan and preaching the coming of the kingdom of heaven. He submits himself, as though he were a sinful man like the rest, to this sacred rite ; and then he starts out to preach the gospel of this kingdom. He works, according to the accounts in the New Testament, which differ,—a year and a half according to one story, and according to others about three years,—visiting Jerusalem once or twice or three times (it is impossible for us to tell just how often), performing wonders and prodigies, healing the sick, raising the dead, teaching the gospel of his kingdom, and at last fulfilling his mission by facing the crowd at Jerusalem at the time of the great feast, and being delivered up into the hands of the Roman authorities, that he might be put to an ignominious death. Between the time of his death and his resurrection, he goes down into the underworld, into the place of torment among the lost. On the third day he miraculously reappears, risen from the dead. He is with his disciples, appearing and disappearing, through a period of about forty days ; and at the end of that time, with those who were about him, he goes up into a mountain, and there, after some farewell words, commissions them to go forth and preach the gospel that he had given among all nations. Then he rises visibly in the air until a cloud receives him out of their sight ; and from that day until this he has sat on the right hand of the throne of God, a mediator and intercessor, showing his hands, his side, his feet, as evidence of his suffering, and pleading with the Father for the forgiveness of those whom he by his suffering and death had redeemed.

Such, in brief outline, is the life of this wonderful being, as told us by the older authorities. Such the life that he





lived here on earth and the work he has engaged in since his disappearance into the skies.

As to his nature and character, a few words must suffice. As to his character, I need to say only one word: that, since he is regarded as God, of course his character is something not to be discussed or defined. We must simply say all-perfect, and leave it there.

As to his nature, however, a few words of definition are required. It took a little while in the early councils of the church for them to decide definitely as to how they should look upon him in this regard. Some of them thought that he was simply God wearing a human body. Of course, there was only one nature. Some of them thought that he was only man divinely sent and guided. Here, again, there was only one nature; and in this case of course, as in the other, he would have only one will, the divine will in the one case and a human will in the other. Then, when the doctrine of the Trinity grew up, he was looked on as possessed of a double nature. In some mysterious way, he was God and man at once, so that one could say of him that he knew a thing as God which he did not know as man. In this way, the apologists have got over the difficulty of his own confessions of being ignorant of certain things. This ignorance was human; he knew these things as God. He was, then, this mysterious dual being, God and man in wondrous combination. But, if he was God, the question then came up as to whether he had more than one will, and, if so, what those wills were. Did he have a divine will as a divine being, or did he have a human will as a human being? At last, they settled on what became the doctrine of the Catholic churches, — that he was to be regarded as of two natures, but one will. So much as to the nature of this wondrous being.

Now, as to the work that he wrought. I need not take

much time in defining it on the orthodox theory, because I have had to anticipate more or less what I should say in this regard. The work that he wrought was the work of atonement, of expiation,—a work that the Church has sometimes thought had chief regard to God according to its theories. Sometimes, it is thought that it had regard to man, influencing God on the one side, influencing man on the other. But, in either case, the work that he wrought was the making it possible for God to forgive, and leading man into a willingness to be forgiven, and so saved from the ruin which resulted from the fall. As to whether he was to save all or not, the Church has never been agreed. From the beginning there have been Universalists, those who believed that the atonement wrought was world-wide and pertained to all souls. Others believed that his atonement only covered a certain section of humanity, only the elect; but that work was to save men. From the orthodox view, this is perfectly consistent; and he is not rightly to be contrasted or compared with any of the other great men of the world. He did not come to teach science; he did not come to teach art; he did not come to produce a complex and growing civilization here on earth. That was not the work that he undertook to do. He left men to their own devices, their own inventions, so far as these were concerned. It was not his business to be a philanthropist in the sense of carrying on popular reform, to put an end to slavery and war. The world was to work out its own destiny, while he simply made a way by which people could be saved in another world. That was the one unique thing which he came to do.

Now, I have a few things that I wish to say concerning this scheme as thus outlined to us. I have anticipated some of them; but, for the completeness of the treatment of my theme, I wish at least to put my finger on them as I pass

them, so that this subject may have a certain finish of its own.

1. In the first place, as we at any rate are fully persuaded, there was no need of any such life, any such suffering, any such death, any such work of atonement being wrought. We go back, and see that the history of humanity not only shows no need, but shows that the very need that has been supposed to have called for this kind of work does not exist. Man has never fallen ; and so there was no need of any plan for redeeming him from the results of the fall.

2. In the next place, there is simply no proof, in the human sense of the word, that any such wonderful, incomprehensible being as this ever existed. What proof could there be in this nineteenth century that a being who lived in the first century combined in himself the double natures of God and man? We know that similar beliefs to this were common in antiquity. There was no end of beings who had either a divine father or a divine mother, and so were supposed to partake of the nature of both. It was an easy thing for this belief to spring up in those old times. We know that it was easy, because many of them did spring up ; but how can there be any proof? Suppose John, instead of hinting such a belief, should have left it on explicit record. Suppose he had made out an affidavit, and had had it signed by the proper legal authorities in Jerusalem, expressing his profound conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was one with the eternal God : of what probative force would such a statement be to us to-day? It would be at most simply an expression of the judgment of a certain unknown person named John, of no more value than the judgment of anybody else, of no more value than the judgment of any man uttered to-day. It seems to me that in the nature of things a statement like that is simply incapable of being established as true.

3. The scheme that I have just outlined, we have found, does not commend itself either as being merciful or just. The entire scheme of redemption, if we take into account the origin of the world, its history, and the divine responsibility from the beginning to the end, we must pronounce as unmerciful and unjust, so that, if it could be established by proof, it would only push us farther away from God instead of drawing us nearer to him.

4. Then one other point. There does not seem to me to be any inspiration, any sense of companionship, any help, in the thought of a being of this double, mysterious, incomprehensible nature. How can he be an example to me? How can he be an inspiration to me? On that theory, Jesus becomes only a theophany, a divine apparition, and the humanity must be lost to us. It seems to me that, in order to conceive him a real being at all, we must think of him either as God or man; but, even though we think we do, we do not succeed in thinking of him as both.

Suppose you talk about the sufferings of the God-man: what suffering is there for one who is conscious that he is Almighty God? To attempt to produce a dramatic effect on the world by portraying the possible sufferings of the Almighty God of the universe seems even absurd. Suppose he bore patiently the affronts of men: cannot a God be patient with a little human ignorance and evil? Suppose he meets a difficulty: what is a difficulty to the Omnipotent? Where can be the sense of patience, of endeavor, and then the ecstasy of triumph, to one who is divine? How, then, can he be an example to me in the midst of my burdens, my sorrows, my temptations, my struggles? It would not comfort me or make me feel any stronger to see a giant accomplish something that was perfectly easy to him. What comforts me, what helps me, what inspires me, is to find

some one on my level who can feel the burdens I feel, who can face the temptations I face, who can understand the difficulties I understand, who can feel the brain perplexities, the problems he cannot solve any more than I can. To find such a one bravely taking the next step, though he cannot see his way any clearer than I can; to see some one, who shares with me my full nature, braver than I am, more patient than I am, stronger than I am,—that comforts, that makes me feel, Here is an example, here is an inspiration, here is something I can be and do!

5. And, then, it is commonly told us that the death and resurrection of Jesus, his resurrection especially, was assurance and warranty for our own belief in a future life. I cannot see how the statement touches the question. Because a God whose body has been dead for three days resumes that body again, what proof is that that I, who am not a God, and whose body must go back and mingle with the earthy elements out of which it came, perhaps for thousands of years, shall rise again? It seems to me there is no parallelism, no assurance, no comfort here.

But I must leave this side of my theme, and hasten to the other, and try to give you my conception of the life, the nature, the character, and the service of Jesus of Nazareth.

I can speak of his origin. I believe not that he was born in Bethlehem, but that he was born four or five years before the beginning of our era, in the little town of Nazareth in Galilee. The statement that he was born in Bethlehem is evidently the result of the supposed necessity of having the Messiah born there because there was a tradition that he was to be. And so years and years after his death, when his biography comes to be written, it is taken for granted that he must have been born in Bethlehem, because it was popularly believed that the Messiah was foreordained to be born

there. There is no other reason that I know of for supposing that he was born anywhere else than in Nazareth. He was born like any other human baby, and grew up in the midst of the simple influences of that quiet country village. We have no glimpse of his childhood except that one—which is doubtless historic—of his appearance in the temple, a boy of precocious development, of deep thought, of wonderful nature even then, but showing no traces of being more precocious than many another human boy has been. Nothing more is seen of him till he is about thirty years of age. Then comes his baptism; and he starts out on his mission to reform the religious life of his people. He goes about doing good, showing sympathy, patience, tenderness, trust; bearing bravely hardship and toil, preaching what he believes to be the truth as revealed to him by the whisper of God to his soul, willing to bear anything for the sake of that truth, facing the obstacles that meet him at every turn, bearing what is harder than all other things for a reformer to bear,—the suspicion, the distrust, and the desertion of his own friends, those whom he thought he could count on though all the rest of the world were against him. So he lives out his life bravely, and at last, in Jerusalem, faces the mob with his higher truth, rebuking the sins of the rulers and teachers of the people, though he knew he was laying himself liable to arrest and punishment. It is a question in my own mind whether he did not expect divine interference to save him, and to establish the kingdom in which he had come so firmly to believe; for there is no question that he regarded himself as the appointed Messiah, the leader of his people; and naturally, in an age when miracle was supposed to be an every-day occurrence, he might expect that the strong hand of the Almighty would be put forth to help and save him, and thus establish the work in which God must

have himself been interested. There is an indication at the very last of this temporary disappointment of Jesus. When he hangs on the cross, just before he dies, he seems to have wondered for one wavering instant,—a wavering that makes us feel unspeakably more tender towards him, because there is a touch of such simple humanity about it, a wavering that makes me feel as though I would take him in my arms and comfort him if I might, when he cries, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Is there anything sublimer, more tenderly touching in all human history than that of a soul brave even unto death, in spite of the weakness that craves so to feel the touch of God’s hand?

The nature and character of Jesus: I do not feel myself adequate to portray my dream of such a man, gentle until he seems womanly; with endurance such as martyrs are made of; with a boldness that shrunk not from the most monstrous of all earthly monsters,—a howling, hooting mob; a courage that could stand unflinching even in the shadow of the cross,—a courage all the more courageous because of the shrinking. Does not your heart leap to meet the bravery of that officer—I use this simply as a feeble illustration—who, when the bullets were whistling about him, was addressed by a new comer, a young officer, who half-tauntingly said, “I judge from the blanching of your face that you are afraid.” And he said, “Yes, I am afraid; and, if you were only half as afraid as I am, you would run.” That is courage that sees the danger, and does not run. That was the courage of Jesus of Nazareth, combined with a tenderness unsurpassed in that of any historic character the world has ever seen,—a compassion peculiarly divine, it seems to me, towards the frail and the fallen, and yet with a power of wrath that had the cut of the lightning stroke. But his wrath, mind you, was always for respectable

sinners, for the hard, the grasping, the avaricious, the cruel, for those who ground down their fellows, those who coined the heart's blood of their fellows into money for their own gratification. His pity, his ineffable tenderness, all and always was for what we call the fleshly frailties, the infirmities, the weaknesses, of men and women. For them, never a hard word fell from his loving, sympathetic, helpful lips. He was human. When we say human, do not think of humanity at its lowest. Do not think we degrade Jesus as in those pitiful terms which speak of him as a "mere man." Do we know any grander word to apply to any being than to say, with the loftiest, deepest, widest significance that can attach to it, "He was a man"? Can you say anything grander than that, a man in the highest reach of manliness?

Was he perfect? Frankly, I must tell you that I do not know. There is no man in all history concerning whose personal biography we know less than we know of Jesus,—only one glimpse of him for thirty years, when he was a boy of twelve; all the rest a blank. We know not whether he was perfect up to his thirtieth year or not. All that we can do is to judge what those years must have been by the fruitage that the life bears after that. I do not know whether he was a perfect man or not; and reverently let me say it is not a question that even has interest for me. I do not care. It is not the most perfect men that have rendered the world the most service or helped it the most. He was nearly enough perfect. He was grand and high enough to be an inspiration, a helper, a leader to all the ages since his time.

I believe that Jesus died like any other man, was buried like any other man. I have no confidence in the story of a physical resurrection. I do think, however, that it is quite



possible that his disciples saw him after his death ; for he was not in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Men like that are never buried. He lived, continued to live. This is the strongest faith of my soul. It does not seem to me impossible that he might have been seen, that he might even have spoken with his disciples ; and that is enough to account for the stories that were circulated concerning him in after years.

Now, I turn from this outline, bald and meagre, to touch on what I conceive to be the services which he has rendered to the world.

I told you the other day that the advocates of almost any great religion have always been accustomed to claim as the result of that religion all the good things that they have found in existence among the people who believe in it. There has been in the *Christian Register* recently—in the Christmas number—a symposium, contributed to by the leading Unitarians of the country, each one expressing his opinion as to what Jesus has done for the world. In that symposium, you find an illustration of this point that I have in mind. There is a certain class of Christians who are ready to claim that everything that distinguishes Christendom to-day above all the other people of the earth is due to the life, the teachings, and the work of Jesus of Nazareth. But here, again, I must say to you that it seems to me this question is impossible to answer. Are we to think of all the good things in the world, or in that section of the world covered by the name Christendom, as having been given to us as a direct result of the life and teachings and work of Jesus? Consider a moment. Here is a great stream of humanity. Its origin is God. This, which we call humanity, this mighty river, we lose in the mists of antiquity. It emerges at last into light. Moses contributed something to it. Isaiah con-

tributed something, and the whole host of Hebrew heroes. Socrates, Plato, and many a Greek philosopher, poet, and artist has poured his tribute into it. Roman writers—Cicero, Seneca, Virgil—have added their tributary streams. As it has come down the ages, all the great men of the world,—Savonarola, Huss, Luther, Dante,—the great group of artists at the time of the Renaissance, scholars, humanitarians, all the leading thinkers, inventors, discoverers, writers, of the most civilized nations of the globe, have contributed their mite to humanity. Who shall untangle this mighty skein, and tell what threads lead directly back to Nazareth? Here are all the differences constituted by the distinctions of nationality, of race. If Christianity produces the same effects on all nations, how, then, does it happen that certain Eastern, Oriental, nations that from the beginning have been Christian are among the most mean and contemptible people on the globe? If Christianity makes everybody that it takes into its power equally great, where is the difference between Spain and Germany, between France and the Norsemen? It seems to me that race—these qualities that we derive from God himself—must account for much. We cannot, then, undertake what seems to me the impossible task of saying how much precisely of that which constitutes the glory of Christendom has come from Jesus of Nazareth.

One thing more seems unquestioned in regard to the direct teachings of Jesus. There is no man who ever lived whose teachings have influenced the world to any great extent who was really less original in the sense of being the first to utter a saying attributed to him than is Jesus of Nazareth. But there is something more than originality in Jesus, something that seems to me mightier. Most of the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount can be traced in some shape or other to some earlier thinker. He did not even originate the

Golden Rule ; and Hillel, a teacher in Jerusalem during the century preceding Jesus, was the first who gave utterance to that thought of the whole law being comprised in love to God and man ; so that the most distinctive sayings of Jesus did not originate with him.

Now turn to the positive side. How much is to be attributed to Jesus and how much to race I may not venture to say ; but I believe that a great deal of it we do owe to this wondrous character. This Christendom of ours has come to be more and more, as ages have gone by, distinguished for what we may call the quality of humanity, for humanness, for the recognition of the value of men as men, as partakers of the divine nature without regard to race, without regard to caste, without regard to social condition, without regard to religion. It has been growing, this feeling of humanity. The mightiest power to-day perhaps in our civilization, that which has in it the most of promise for the future, has been the peculiarly fine, distinctive qualities that were characteristics of Jesus of Nazareth. From his day to this, though warring factions have been fighting with his name as a watchword on their lips, he has hung in the heavens over all the turmoil on earth, as the sun hangs above the stormy sea ; and, as the calm, bright, blue sky tends to soothe and quiet the storm, so at last his own perfect, light-giving image has been reflected back to the heavens.

Then who shall measure another power,—the power of the ideal humanity that has come to attach itself to the name of Jesus ? Jesus has for ages, whatever else he may have been, stood as an ideal man in the thought, the heart, the life of the world ; and there is no power mightier to propagate this in their hearts and their lives than just this dream of the ideal. Men have forever been haunted by the

thought of this possible human perfection, purity, tenderness, justice, truth; and it has spoken to them so that they have been compelled to hear this still small voice above all the turmoil and clamor of life, and it has had power to reproduce itself in millions of other lives.

There is one other power that I wish to emphasize as distinctively a peculiar and mighty power of Jesus, such as attaches to no other historic character. If you have ever thought deeply, if you have studied the world, if you have observed life, if, in short, you have lived, you have learned this: that there are men and women who, the moment you go near them, seem to tap your vitality, to drain the life out of you. They are like a drizzly, sleety day, which, in spite of yourself, will depress you, weigh you down. You feel their presence as a sort of incubus; and you are glad to escape, as one escapes out of a cave into daylight. Then there are others in whose presence you feel as a plant feels when the sun shines on it, when it is refreshed by the dew, when it is played upon by the life-giving air. You feel stronger in their presence, you feel kindled, inspired, lifted up. Your brain has more power, your heart more courage, your nerve is braced. You are a thousand times more a man. These are the ones—who can explain it?—who have the power to impart life by contact. I do not believe that any one possesses that power who has an inferior brain; but the brain part of it is not the chief part. So far as I can understand or describe it, it is soul power, the power of the divine in us.

And, as one feels life thrilling from contact with God himself, so we are made more alive when we come into the presence of these souls, and are permitted to touch even the hem of their garments. I do not know of an historic man who possessed this life-giving quality to the same extent or

the same degree that Jesus possessed it. In his presence, we feel the touch of life, we are lifted, inspired, made strong.

Jesus and souls like him help us in another way. We see them towering above us like mountains that catch the first rays of light, while we are in the dark. We are not tall enough to see, but we can believe that they see what they tell us they do. They can impart to us their faith, their trust; and it seems to me a purely rational thing. As a man on a mountain summit can see what I cannot in the valley, so, when some man that I recognize as having brain and heart and soul unspeakably above me assures me that he does see some great spiritual verity, I can at any rate feel that he probably does; and so I gain a grander faith in that which I was disposed to doubt and let slip from my grasp.

As my contribution to the symposium to which I have referred in the *Christian Register*, I expressed this thought in the following sonnet:—

As when the valleys all in shadow lie,  
And shadowy shapes of fear still haunt the night,  
Some mountain peak reflects the coming light,  
And waiting lips break forth with joyful cry  
For gladness that at last the day is nigh,—  
So when some soul, that towers afar, is bright,  
The souls that sit in shadow, at the sight,  
Grow sudden glad to know 'tis light on high!

And when these mountain-towering men can say,  
“We see, though it be hidden from your eyes,”  
We can believe in better things to be!  
So, though the shadows still obscure our way,  
We see the light, reflected from the skies,  
That crowns thy brows, O Man of Galilee!

## THE OLD CHURCH AND THE NEW.

---

A VERY superficial examination of the conditions of the modern world reveals the fact that the church to-day has no such hold on the hearts, the minds, the fears, the consciences of the great masses of the people as it has had in the past. And yet I believe, with all my heart, that the church, or a similar organization under some other name, that shall be the church in essence, that shall stand for its purposes and accomplish its work, shall see a grander history in the future than it has ever known in the past.

Those who still believe that the church is a miraculously established divine institution do recognize the fact — because they cannot help it — that there are fewer and fewer among the more highly civilized, the better educated, of the world who agree with it. The tendency is undoubtedly away from that old idea of the church. The tendency is to discredit its exclusive claims, and to feel that we can get along very comfortably without it, and to cast off all anticipation of any disastrous results in the future on account of its neglect. I say those who believe most strongly in the claims of the church do recognize this fact. They are afraid of it. They wonder whether it means a tendency downward to a deeper depravity on the part of the world, or whether it is only a temporary tendency, springing up as the result of modern science and of the enlargement of the secular life of the civilized world. But they recognize the fact; and that is the

point that I wish to emphasize. On the other hand, these more highly educated, better civilized, freer men and women are coming to feel more and more, in certain quarters at any rate, that the church is something that is going to die away, however long it may be about it. They believe that it is a thing of the past, and that the future is to see no church. They have identified these ecclesiastical organizations with certain theories concerning God, concerning men, concerning human destiny; and since they are thoroughly convinced that these theories are discredited, since they no longer hold them, they see no reason for supposing that the church is to continue. They believe that it will confine itself to the representation of these old and dying beliefs, and, when the last trace of these antique conceptions of the universe has passed out of sight, that the church will fade away with them.

I wish, therefore, to ask you to join with me in considering for a little while the origin of the church, some phases in the course of its development, and the tendency of things to-day, that we may come to some rational conclusion as to what the true church is, as to whether there is any permanent basis for it, whether we, as manly men and womanly women, are to still continue our loyalty to it, whether it is something permanent as a part of the better and higher life of the world.

Some one — I do not remember who — has said, "No synagogue, no church;" expressing in this terse phrase the fact that the church grew out of the Jewish synagogue. Undoubtedly this was true; but, if it means that there never would have been any Christian Church but for the Jewish synagogue, I must take exception to the statement, for I believe that that which lies at the heart of this religious organization which we call the church would have manifested itself in the course of human development whether there had been

a synagogue or not. But, historically, it is true that the Christian Church did spring out of the Jewish synagogue. I wish, therefore, to note this synagogue for a moment, that we may see how naturally the church was evolved out of it; and, as the church came from the synagogue, so we may believe that out of the church may be evolved something, under whatever name, which shall represent a still higher form of development.

In the early history of the Jews there was only a tabernacle besides certain holy places here and there,—consecrated spots where the people came together to offer sacrifices. The synagogue sprang up as a manifestation of the later religious life. During the exile, when they could not go to the temple, after the written law came to be recognized as the guide and teacher of the people, then the synagogue grew up as a perfectly natural development, an expression of the common need of the people to assemble together at some stated time for the study of this “law of God” which they recognized as the law of their lives. So we find that during the later life of the Jewish people, scattered all over the country, in every little town, were the synagogues; and so many in Jerusalem that they were probably numbered by the hundred. It took at least ten men to constitute the organization which was the heart of the synagogue life and worship. The synagogue was usually built on some high place, some elevation in the town. It was the centre of the religious life of the people. As the people entered it and as they sat down to worship, they always faced towards the holy city. The one thing they did was to gather here to listen to the reading of the law and its exposition, that they might comprehend and so be in condition to obey the word of God as they understood it. The synagogue, then, was in vigorous, flourishing life when Jesus came; but Jesus,



so far as any record is given, did not organize any church. Apparently, it did not occur to him to organize one. Neither, as I believe, did he appoint any sacraments or rites, such as baptism or the Supper, with any idea that they were to become a permanent part of such a growing civilization as the world has attained since his day.

Let us see what Jesus did, and why. He came to this earth, and cast his seeds of divine truth into the midst of the society about him, and then was speedily cut off before he had time to organize anything, even if that had been his intention; but, doubtless, it was not his intention. Beyond any rational question, as it seems to me, Jesus believed,—for he most explicitly taught this, if he be correctly reported,—that the end of the present order of things was to come before some of those with whom he was speaking should die. What call then, what need, what room, for any such organization as the church? There would be this general organization of renewed humanity in what he called the kingdom of God, after his speedy reappearance; but in the mean time there was no need of any church. And it seems to me that it lies clearly open on the very surface of the New Testament that Jesus did not establish any such rites as baptism or the Lord's Supper with any idea of their being permanent elements in any church life. Jesus is reported, I know, as saying, among the very last things that he uttered to his disciples before he ascended into heaven, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It seems to me incredible that he could have used this language, because in a few years we find his disciples quarrelling over the question whether the gospel was to be preached to any one but the Jews. This would have been impossible if he had given an explicit command on the sub

ject. In regard to the matter of baptism, we know that this formula about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit did not grow up for many years after the time of Jesus' death. We find Paul, in a letter to the church in Corinth, discussing some of the factions that had grown up, and expressing his gratification that he had baptized only two or three, lest some one should charge him with attempting to build up a church, an organization, around his own personality, lest they should say "he had baptized in his own name." If there had been a direct command from the leader of the church, from the very God of the universe himself, to baptize after a particular and specific form, it is incredible that it should have entered the mind of the apostle that any one could baptize in any other name.

Then, in regard to the Supper, the matter seems to me equally clear. Jesus broke bread, and asked his disciples after his death to remember him when they met together to break bread,—one of the simplest things in all the world: "Remember me every day when you meet together and break bread; recall to mind the fact that I broke bread with you, and asked that you should thus recall my memory." But, since the whole existing order of things was to come to an end before that generation should pass away, it could not have entered his mind that this rite should ever assume any such proportions as it has in the history of the world. But, though he did not establish any church nor found, as I believe, any special sacraments, yet the growth of the church was perfectly natural. After he had passed away, those in sympathy met together to talk over their common hope, their common fears, their common duties. They met on the day which recalled the one when, as they believed, he had shown himself victor over death. They met together to talk over the words that he had left them, and the mission that

he had committed to their care. Then, as they attempted to spread this gospel among their fellow-men, they would naturally have some meeting-place, some meeting-time, some specific form of gathering themselves together; and so the church, which simply means a meeting, a coming together, would be as natural as the bursting of a bud in the spring.

The church, then, was the simple, rational, human organization of those in sympathy with each other in their common hopes and purposes. But when the coming of Jesus had been long delayed, and the church had grown to such proportions that those who were its leaders and guides could see before them the tremendous and almost universal power over men which it would exercise, then it naturally changed the form of its organization, and became a closer body, with a hierarchy of officers, from the highest to the lowest. And as it claimed to stand as the very representative of God on earth, to speak his word and to exercise his power until the time of that second coming, it naturally took on that shape which it assumed along in the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries, until it culminated at last in a mighty despotism during the Middle Ages. It was a natural transformation, a perfectly natural growth. The church then came to be an organization that claimed to be the voice and the representative of God on earth. They put forth the claim that the spirit of God abode in this organization, that this was a body corporate, whose soul was the very spirit of the Almighty. He, therefore, who became a member of this body became a partaker of this divine life; and he who was cut off from it was cut off from all human sympathy in this world and from all divine sympathy in the next. You can see, then, very easily, since this represented the majority belief of the civilized world, how naturally the church became the mightiest spiritual despotism that the world has

ever seen. It claimed to dominate the entire life of humanity. Kings were glad to kneel at the feet of the pope and recognize him as the present deputy of God on earth, to go on his errands and to execute his will. So the church became a mighty power that grasped and moulded human life at will, that held in its hands this world and the next,—such a power as no universal empire like that of ancient Rome could ever hope to rival in the magnificence of its ideas and the sweep of its power.

But the church, drunk with power, arrogant, cruel, came at last to attempt to do such things as God himself never attempted, and, though he should attempt, could not accomplish. The church, at last, shocked the moral sense of Europe. It became not only a burden on its physical and political life, but shocked its conscience, so that they began to question whether this could be the divine institution that it claimed. For it attempted to assert the power not only to forgive sins, but to dispense people beforehand from the necessity of righteousness, and to sell to them for money the privilege of committing sins. This the righteous sense of the noble men and women of the time could no longer endure. So there came the Protestant Reformation; and the Bible was used as the centre and fountain of all authority instead of the church.

I wish you to notice one thing in regard to this change: that it was a step towards rationalism, a step towards the supremacy of reason, a step towards the acceptance of the scientific method, the demand for proof, of belief only on the best evidence. The moment that the Bible was made the last court of appeal, there came up the question as to the interpretation of the Bible, and so a doorway opened for the use of reason as the supreme faculty of man; and, though they claimed the Bible as supreme, in spite of that

claim, it was reason and evidence that determined the nature of the Bible, its contents, and what it should be supposed to teach mankind in the name of God. So, though the church still claimed to represent God, though it still claimed to have in its hands the conditions of human salvation, though it still claimed that men must be members of it in order to cherish rightly an eternal hope, the moment reason was made the final court of appeal, and allowed to adjudicate concerning the claims of the Bible, modern rationalism was something that could not be prevented; it was inevitable. The church, then, has inevitably split up into a hundred, almost a thousand sects; and, in their mutual war upon each other, they have destroyed all possible claims to the infallibility of any one of them. At last, the mind of man is coming to be free. It has shaken off this spiritual despotism; and now each man for himself dares to think concerning God and concerning his own nature, and to assume the responsibility for his life in this world and in all worlds.

Here, then, is the point to which the church has come,—the point that is indicated in my opening words; and we are face to face with the question whether the church is to pass away with the passing away of these old ideas with which it has been so long identified or whether there is something in human nature that still demands this kind of expression for itself. I believe that, as the old Christian Church was evolved out of the Jewish synagogue, so we to-day are in the very midst of a process of evolution into a new and higher and better church than the old. I still use the word "church," because I love it, because in its clear meaning it is so simple, so human, so natural, and because I know of no better name.

Let us look, then, and see whether there be any basis for the continued existence of the church. It seems to me that

there is a basis as broad as the world and as eternal as human nature, and it is this: the permanently essential religious nature of man. Man is a religious animal. Above and beyond all other qualities and characteristics that distinguish him he is religious. This is true now, and has been in all ages, and must continue to be. People who are interested in any one subject naturally organize themselves into some external expression of it. There are art associations, scientific societies, philosophical societies. Business men organize for the carrying on of their plans. Whenever men have interests in common which they can attain better by common action, their organization is natural and inevitable; and so I believe that as men are religious, always have been, always must be, and that as this, in spite of all considerations that may be adduced to the contrary, is the very highest interest of human life, so I believe that people will necessarily organize themselves in this way. It may call itself by a different name; but in essence and to all intents and purposes it must and will be a church.

Now let us consider for a moment what are some of the common ends and aims that necessitate this organization, that make it natural, human, rational.

In the first place, a church attempts to express the fact that all men and women are dependent on God. They may not think of it under those terms; but all men and all women, if they think at all, must recognize the fact that they do stand in dependent, vital relations to the Power that was here before them, that will be here after they have gone, that surrounds them like an atmosphere,—a Power in which they live and move and have their being, that is above them, behind them, that touches them on the right hand and on the left, that they face at every moment, that they never can escape; a Power to which the light and the darkness are both

alike, a Power, the laws of whose life are the conditions of all human life, physical, mental, moral, spiritual. They must recognize the fact that it is in the knowledge of this Power and the relations in which we stand to it that lies the secret of all happiness, all growth, all nobleness, all that we may hope for or attain. What has been more natural, more rational, more simple, more human, more divine, than an organization that has for its aim and end the study of this Power, and the relation in which we stand to it,—the study, in other words, of the very conditions of life itself?

Then that other quality in all noble natures,—in all natures I will say, leaving out the word “noble,” but more highly manifested in the noble,—that tendency to worship, the feeling of awe, of reverence, of looking towards that which is above and beyond us. By as much as a man is noble, whether he thinks of it or not, whether he knows it or not, whether he calls it by that name or not, he is and he must be a worshipper; for worship means just this uplift and uplook of the soul towards the more beautiful, towards the truer, the higher, the nobler, towards the ever elusive ideal that haunts us, that we have not grasped as yet, that, ever following, we do come into the presence of something higher and better. What, then, more simple, what more rational, human, divine, than that people should meet together to help each other, to inspire and stimulate each other in this religious, the highest and grandest, quality of the human soul?

Then the church, if it be a true one, represents that universal human longing for an organization which the world has dreamed of, which poets have sung, which prophets have foretold, but which has never yet been realized except in part,—the organization of that perfect democracy of human life in which men and women shall meet, if it be only for one hour a week, simply as men and women, in the pres-

ence of the divine and the eternal, being shamed out of the pettinesses and the littlenesses of these trivial, passing human distinctions that we count so great from the stand-point of our ordinary society. There is something in men and women deeper than their income, something deeper than the houses they live in, something deeper than the clothes they wear, something deeper than the culture they may have attained, than the books they have read, something deeper than their artistic tastes, something deeper than any of these things on which we found our distinctions of caste. There is that essential quality that makes us men and women, children of the one eternal, universal Spirit; and it is well that one hour a week, if no more, we should meet together in the consciousness of a presence in the light of which these things fade out, and we are men and women only. This finds expression better than anywhere else in a true church. If men forget themselves nowhere else, they will do it in the presence of that eternal Power which makes all these considerations vanity and folly.

Then again, however strong we may be, however self-contained, there are times when the child in us asserts itself, when we are weak, when our feet become weary and our hearts are discouraged, and the way of life is hard. Then we need the help, the comfort, the sympathy, of our fellow-men. There are times when, though perfectly well aware that a sympathetic word or a warm hand-clasp cannot take the burden off the heart, they do still help us to bear it. They make us stronger, they give us courage, they help our belief in the reality of that infinite and eternal tenderness and care of which they are only glimpses and outshinings. And we need an organization like this, where we can touch hands, feel the touch of each other's shoulders, as we stand side by side in the sympathy of a common purpose, common hopes, common aims.



I have led you along, if you have followed my thought sympathetically, where you are ready to apprehend what I believe to be the truth,— that a true church is not something to be apologized for, concerning which a man should be half-ashamed when he finds himself interested in it. I know men who, because of their interest in a special minister or some special cause which the church has at heart, have suddenly found themselves interested in the church itself; and they expect that, as they go along the street, some of their comrades will smile at them and wonder what it all means, showing thus how petty, how poor, how trivial, how one-sided the conception of the church and of church life has been in their own minds and in the minds of their comrades.

What is a church? What is its chief aim? What is its nature? A church is an organization of men and of women for the purpose of helping each other to live the divine—that is, the noblest conceivable human—life. The church is the only institution on the face of the earth that stands for the very highest thing of which we can dream. So grand, so high is it, as I estimate it, that all other human institutions, all other human organizations, all arts, all sciences, can only be its servants. Art may cultivate a certain side of man. We may call in the aid of art to decorate and beautify human life; but the church means human life itself. We may call in the aid of science to teach us the facts concerning the visible universe, the organization and care of our bodies, to teach us how to act, what to think, how to feel, how to live; but science in its very highest manifestations can do no grander thing than serve the purposes for which a noble church exists. It is simply to minister to the idea that the church represents. Literature may help to express the life, to enrich the ritual, the service, of the church. It may

help as a manifestation of the intellectual and emotional side of human nature ; but the church which is alive itself is forever beyond and includes all literature, and would simply use it as an aid to that grander thing for which it stands. And so music. The church may call on it to help it give inarticulate utterance to those feelings too subtle, too far beyond present experiences, to be expressed in definite terms ; but music is only a handmaid to human life, that thing which is at the very heart, which is the soul of the church. And so all other departments of human life and human activity are only fragments, parts of human life ; while the church, if it be rightly and nobly organized, is that one thing which helps men to live, using everything else, or subordinating them, to that one thing which is higher than them all. For something grander than art, than literature, than science, than music, than philanthropy, than anything the world ever dreamed of or can ever dream of, is the manhood which creates and uses all these. The true church is the organization of the highest manhood and womanhood for the sake of mutual help and growth towards still grander manhood and womanhood.

What, now, is the relation in which those things which are ordinarily associated with religion stand to the church as thus conceived? Has this church a bible? Yes, all bibles. Every truth that bears on human life is a part of the bible of this church of which I am speaking.

Will this church have a creed? It cannot help it. It must of necessity. If it be clear in its thought, if it have certain definite conceptions of God, of man and destiny,—these will constitute a creed, whether it ever be written or not ; but the place for the creed will be over the pulpit, as a statement to be studied, as an ideal to be approached as rapidly as possible, not as a gate at the entrance to be

locked in the faces of those who otherwise would be glad to enter.

Will this church pray? It cannot help it. For whether men and women utter it or not, breathe it or not, every desire, every upward aspiration, is a prayer.

Will this church have a ritual? It may or it may not, as happens. Any formula of service, any order, any ritual, any sacrament or rite of any kind, which any body of men and women find to be so vitally related to their condition that it can help them, may be naturally and freely used.

I said, a moment ago, that the belief in the church as a divinely established institution was passing away. I meant that only in accordance with the terms as they have been used. If you will think for a moment that God is the source of all our human life, that it is God in us, in this religious nature of ours, that is lifting us towards himself,—if you think for a moment that these natural tendencies of ours towards organization and mutual help is God present and working in and through us,—then you will gain a glimpse of that grander thought which was attempted to be expressed, but was only partially expressed, in the past,—the thought that the church, this natural, rational, human organization, is based eternally in the divine. And so the church, in this sense, is a divine institution, and, by way of emphasis, the divinest institution of which we can dream.

Now, such a church as this has existed in potency, in promise, at least, in all ages. All men and all women in all the past who, according to the best light they had, have been feeling after God if haply they might find him, have been members of this church, no matter whether in Christendom or out of it, no matter of what race or age. All the men and all the women who have consecrated themselves to the attainment of their highest ideals, who have sacri-

ficed themselves for the service of their fellow-men, who have given themselves to this lift of the God within them which bears them on towards better things,—all these have been members of this church. And this church, I believe, under some form or name, will go on increasing in power as humanity becomes higher and better, and will cease to exist only as it comes to full and perfect expression, dying in the attainment of that which needs no farther effort to attain.

As voicing sweetly this universality of the genuine religious life of the world, I want to read the following beautiful hymn by Samuel Longfellow:—

One holy Church of God appears  
Through every age and race,  
Unwasted by the lapse of years,  
Unchanged by changing place.

From oldest time, on farthest shores,  
Beneath the pine or palm,  
One Unseen Presence she adores,  
With silence or with psalm.

Her priests are all God's faithful sons,  
To serve the world raised up;  
The pure in heart, her baptized ones;  
Love, her communion-cup.

The truth is her prophetic gift,  
The soul her sacred page;  
And feet on mercy's errands swift  
Do make her pilgrimage.

O living Church, thine errand speed;  
Fulfil thy task sublime;  
With bread of life earth's hunger feed;  
Redeem the evil time!

## THE END OF THE WORLD.

---

I SHALL have to engage during this morning hour not in argument to any great extent, not in appeal to your reason, not in attempt to move your emotions; for the subject will not require it. The principal thing I have to do is rather descriptive and historical. And yet it is necessary that I cover this theme, in order to make the line of thought in which at present I am engaged more nearly complete. The reason why I shall not appeal to your reason or your emotions is not because the topics which I shall take up have not occupied a large place in the history of Christian thought, but because—however large the place which they have occupied—they are ceasing to be treated in a serious manner by the larger part, at least, of the pulpits of those churches that still cling, in the main, to the old ideas.

I wish, under this general title of "The End of the World," to group together certain things that have no logical connection, but that belong to this period that the Church, until within the past few years, has looked forward to as certain to come. If the Church believed these things as it did five hundred years ago, I should need to treat each one of them at length, to argue and appeal concerning them; but they are fading out of the conscious thought, fading out of the vital belief of the world, and therefore I can group them all together, giving thus a general picture of what the Church once held, and what, indeed, a good many ministers still hold.

The Jews were accustomed to divide all time into two great epochs, the one preceding and the one following the Messianic advent, this advent being to them the turning-point of time. They believed that death was not a part of the original plan of the Creator,—that it came into the world as the result of a certain spiritual catastrophe that produced its effect not only upon the body of man, making that mortal which was immortal before, but on the entire face of the created world. They believed that, as the result of the fall of man, not only did man himself cease to possess his birthright of immortality, but that the earth was cursed for his sake,—that thorns and briers sprang up where only flowers and fruits had been before, that animals which had been peaceable in their natures were changed into beasts of prey,—so that there was discord throughout the whole earth. But they believed that when the Messiah came there was to be a transformation,—that the world was to be made over into its former perfect likeness, the thorns and the briers were to disappear, the wolf and the lamb were to lie down together in peace, the lion was to lose his carnivorous nature and be changed even in physical structure, so that he would eat straw like an ox; and all harmful things were to become innocent, and the earth was to be once more a scene of beauty and of peace. The coming of the Messiah was to be the complete recovery of all that had been lost.

When the Christian Church came, inheriting a certain amount of the old thought of the old world, and adding to it much of its own, it still held to the idea not only of the birth of the Messiah, but of his second coming. I suppose that the early disciples of Jesus expected that, if he proved himself to be the true Messiah, then this wondrous transformation was to take place then and there. Jerusalem was to become the centre and glory of the earth. All evil was to

be done away. All peoples were to become subject to his sceptre of peace. We find expressions of disappointment on the part of the disciples after Jesus had been crucified. You remember the two who are represented as walking together on one quiet evening towards the little town of Emmaus, discussing what had taken place ; and one of them said, "We trusted this had been he who was to have redeemed Israel,"—as much as to say, We have been disappointed: we trusted ; but he who was to have been the conqueror is himself conquered, and our hopes were vain. They expected, then, this transformation of the world at the time of his advent. But after his crucifixion,—after they had come to believe that he was alive again, and had only disappeared temporarily into the heavens,—then sprang up the belief in the second advent. He was to come again, and come with power and great glory, accompanied by angels, preceded by trumpeting heralds. And these trumpet sounds were to reach even the "dull, cold ear of death"; for the dead were to listen, and the graves were to tremble and open and release their inhabitants. This, then, was the general belief,—that Jesus was to come again, and that, at the second coming, this wonderful transformation was to take place,—the transformation in which the Jews had afore-time had faith.

This belief was general in the early church. It has left its finger-mark from beginning to end on the New Testament. I marvel how anybody can read it, and not see the traces plainly. I marvel how any one can read the sayings of Jesus himself, and not see his literal faith in this literal coming for the renewal of the world. It was to be a miraculous coming, and to have miraculous results. He was to come suddenly, as a thief in the night, and choose the elect from the four winds of heaven, gathering them to-

gether as the wheat is selected from the chaff, so that it may be destroyed, and they gathered into the garner. And we find this belief emphasized by such side touches as this. Some one had evidently asked Paul the question, Since the delay of this reappearance, for we supposed it was coming before anybody died,—but since the delay, since one after another of those who expected Christ has died, then what? Are not they to share in the glory of these thousand years' reign of perfect peace? And Paul answers the question definitely. He says: Do not be troubled in regard to this matter. When Jesus appears in the heavens, those dead who have believed in him will be raised incorruptible; and we who are alive will be changed in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump, and, being clothed upon with our celestial bodies, will be ready to enter into this perfect kingdom. This reign of Christ was to last a thousand years, and during that time nobody was to die. There were to be no tears, no sorrow, no pain; and the whole earth was to be clothed with beauty and joy, in keeping with the gladness of the hearts of the redeemed.

You see on what a small scale the world was gauged at that time. They believed that it had been in existence something like five or six thousand years,—years of toil and struggle and sorrow and sin,—corresponding to the six days of labor in the week; and that was to be followed by a Sabbath of a thousand years, the millennium,—a thousand years of peace and rest from all turmoil, from all that had disturbed the joy of human life. This belief was held so vividly by the early Church that, time and time again, there was panic over Christendom; and everybody was in expectation of the immediate opening of the heavens. And, when the year one thousand struck, there was wide-spread dismay; for they believed that then, at any rate, the end was to be.



It was only a few years ago that a great convention was held, in one of our large towns, of ministers who still cherish this belief. Prominent men from all the large cities of the country were present. This belief is held and taught by men like Mr. Moody; and it is for this reason that he does not believe that we are to work for the general civilization of the world. He thinks that that is a hopeless thing, that what we are to do is to save as many men and women — individuals — as we can, and get them ready to meet the Lord in the air. And this belief has ample justification; for the New Testament is full of it. And yet we, since we have learned the course of history, look upon it as a passing dream. We believe, indeed, in something quite as fine as the millennium with the forces now at work: that they will issue in a glorified humanity, in which brain and conscience and heart are supreme, when man shall be skilled in thought, efficient in hand and in all executive powers, so he will be able to control and shape the world at his will. So science looks forward to something more than a millennium, more than a thousand years of human conquest, over a globe recreated in the image of the highest thought and the highest beauty and the highest hope for all mankind.

Passing now from this thought of the millennium—for, as I warned you at the outset, I am to group together many of those things which made up the grand scenic display with which the world was to come to its consummation—let me touch for a moment on the thoughts that have been held concerning the fact of death. I have told you what the Jews thought about it. I have only to repeat that in substance to tell you what Christendom has thought. It was generally held that, in spite of the fact that he had a material body, man was immortal; that the plan of God was that men and women should live here on this earth for a long

period of time, a period perhaps figured by the report as to the ages of some of the old patriarchs, five, six, or seven hundred, or a thousand years. Then some marvellous and sudden change was to come over them, fitting them to be translated into that sphere that we speak of as spiritual. Death was a penalty, an afterthought of God. It came as a judgment upon men on account of their sins. But, as the world became more and more wicked with the process of years, the period of human life was shortened; and men, lest they should develop into too great depravity, were permitted to live only three or four score years of labor and sorrow, which were soon cut off, and they vanished away. We know to-day that this is an unfounded view as to the origin and meaning of death. The Church was startled into another thought about it when geology discovered in the record of the rocks, where God's own hand had written it, that death has been on this old earth of ours for hundreds of thousands of years. And, that you may know that the change is not very ancient, I may say that I was taught by my professor in the theological seminary that this fact of death having existed before Adam was on account of God's pre-perception of the fact that man would sin. So he ordained death on the part of the lower creation, that it might be in harmony with that which should take place afterwards. By this interpretation, death still remained a penalty that was inflicted on even the animal world on account of the sin of Adam; and the earth was cursed on his account, so that it might be a fitting scene for the display of those qualities of evil and wrong which were to be developed.

The next point to which I wish to call your attention is one that has played a large part in the history of theological thought; *i.e.*, the "intermediate state." The question came up naturally, since they believed in the resurrection of the

body and the general judgment, as to what became of the soul between the time of the death of the body and the final consummation of all things. We are accustomed to-day to think — those of us who believe in a future life at all — that this life continues right on in spite of the apparent break which we call death. We are accustomed to think of it as no more than a night's sleep. We lie down at night, become unconscious, for what to us, no matter how long the sleep may be, is only a moment; and we wake again. There is no break: the night does not change us. We rise in the morning what we were when we sank into unconscious slumber. So we think about the soul. It passes into its fitting condition, determined by the nature and the character of the soul itself. In other words, if a man believes to-day in heaven and in hell, he believes that the souls of the dead go at once, without waiting for anything else to happen, either to the one or to the other place, according to which their destiny points them.

But are you aware how very modern all this thought is? It is only within a few years that the Church has taught any such doctrine. The "intermediate state" played a very important part throughout the larger portion of Christian history. Let me lead to it by asking you to think for a moment of the condition of mind of the ancient world. In Greece, it never occurred to those who believed in the immortality of the soul to suppose that the dead, however virtuous they might be, went to live with the gods. When a man died, he did not go to Olympus. Jupiter and his celestial court, or some especial favorite whom he might have selected from among the great masses of mankind, were the inhabitants of the celestial sphere. He went to Hades,—the bad and the good together. What was Hades? It was a sort of underground cavern, a world of comparative twilight. It was

going away from the blue sky, from the fair sun, from all the greenness and beauty of the world,—going down into the shadow-world. But this shadow-world was not all alike. There was, in the first place, a sort of limbo, where people went who were neither very bad nor very good. Then there was the region of the blest, for those who had been conspicuous for their goodness and the service they had rendered to mankind. Then there was Tartarus, the place of torment where those who had abused their manhood or their womanhood, who had been false or traitorous to their fellow-men, who had been conspicuous by the evils they had done, met their doom. The Church inherited precisely this idea; and, until comparatively modern times, there is no trace in Christian thought of the belief that the good who died went to heaven, as we say now. When Jesus forgave the penitent thief on the cross, and said to him, “This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise,” he did not mean that the thief should be in heaven the moment he expired. Jesus himself, according to the popular idea, did not go to heaven. He went to Hades for the three days and nights preceding his resurrection.

And so the Church believed almost universally in this underground abode of the dead. It was taught in the Middle Ages as such a realistic thing that some would-be astronomers, who were attempting to account for the movement of the earth, went so far as to suppose that, as volcanic eruptions were caused by the attempt to turn over of a giant imprisoned under the mountain, so the very movements of the earth itself were caused by the struggles of the damned in hell,—hell being at the centre of the terrestrial globe. It was believed then that good and bad together went to Hades immediately after death; and Hades was divided into Paradise and Gehenna. You must remember that in the New

Testament, in almost every instance where the word "hell" occurs, it is Hades in the Greek, and that it does not necessarily mean a place of torment. This penitent thief who was forgiven went to Hades, but to that part of it called "Paradise," where the blessed awaited the day when consummate, perfect blessedness was to be theirs.

There were certain sections of the Church that believed in the sleep of the soul; and, that you may know that I am not troubling you with things that are too antique, I can remember, in my childhood, with perfect distinctness hearing all these questions discussed, hearing one person express the belief that his friends who had fallen asleep would sleep until the resurrection, unconscious. Others thought that they were to be in a sort of partial blessedness until their final destiny was decided, one holding one view and another another. You will find these thoughts permeating nine-tenths of the churches of Christendom to-day. This, then, is another feature of that great group which sets forth to our thought what was to be at the end of the world.

Though they believed that this planet was to come to an end at that time, yet the New Testament phrase does not refer so much to the destruction of this earth as it does to the end of a great cycle of time. In the Greek, it is the end of an æon,—the end of an age, the end of this general dispensation of affairs and the beginning of a new and grander cycle.

Next, of course, after this matter of death and the intermediate state, we come to the question of the resurrection of the body. It seems perhaps to you a good deal like antiquity for me to spend any time in discussing a point like this. I do it, not in the way of argument so much as in the way of description; and yet this is not entirely an outworn belief. Even where it is outgrown in the vital consciousness

of the people of the time, it still stands on record in the creeds. One phrase of the Apostles' Creed, which is repeated in so many of the churches of Christendom every Sunday by the whole congregation together, is, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." If you ask the minister of a church if he believes in the resurrection of the body, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, perhaps nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand, he will tell you that he does not. He has learned to interpret the phrase, and make it stand simply for the continuance of life. He says that he does believe in the resurrection of the body; but, as a matter of fact, he believes in something else, and something that the phrase when it came into existence in the early history of Christianity never suggested. It was believed thoroughly by the Jews that the Messianic advent was to be preceded not by the resurrection of everybody, but by the resurrection of all the good; and this belief was carried so far that it was thought that persons living in a certain district of Palestine were to rise first. And as the Chinese, at the present time, no matter where they may die, wish their bones to repose in the holy land from which they came, so the devout Jew wished to have his body carried from any point of the earth where he had lived, that it might be buried in this sacred spot and be among those who should have part in the first resurrection.

Mr. Spurgeon and men like him preach to-day — Mr. Talmage does also — this belief in the literal resurrection of the bodies that we wear here on earth. Some tell us that the body has shared in the sins of the soul, and therefore ought to share in its punishment. They tell us that the bodies of the saints and martyrs have shared in the sorrows, the struggles, the tears and heart-aches of the soul, and therefore ought to share in the glory. So they teach that God,

being omnipotent and omniscient, has both the power and the wisdom to bring this wondrous thing to pass; that he can trace all over the world the slightest dust particles that have entered into the body of the saint, and at the right moment bring them together again. Doubtless many of the martyrs have been burned, their ashes cast into some running stream that took them down to the river, and the river to the sea, so that they have gone around the globe. Doubtless Almighty Wisdom is able to trace each particle, and Almighty Power is able to collect them from the farthest end of the world. But even the arguing of a question like this before a modern audience seems out of place, and almost absurd; for our conception of what continued existence means is such to-day that these bodies that we have worn have no part in it. But, even though it were necessary to argue the point, it seems to me that one consideration alone would make it plain. It only calls for a simple question in arithmetic. Each one of us, if he has lived threescore years, has worn quite a number of distinct and separate bodies, as distinct and separate as the suits of clothes with which he has warmed and protected that body. One of these bodies may have shared with the soul some one of its sins. So, if the body must share the penalties of this wrong-doing with the soul,—if the body has to share the glory of that soul that is redeemed,—then all these separate bodies must be brought together and combined in some strange and monstrous way into one. Then not only that, but we know that the particles which compose the bodies which we are wearing to-day, and with which, perchance, we may die, have entered into and been part of the bodies of other men and women. And who shall have these particles, to enter into the composition of his resurrection-body?

Furthermore, we know that when we compute the number

of people who have been born, who have lived and who have died here on this planet, it would take several worlds like this, although every particle of matter composing it were used, to furnish material for the manufacture of enough bodies to go around. The slightest consideration of a question like this disposes of it, except in the case of those who read a text and then abdicate their brains in favor of the meaning of that text, and say that, in spite of reason and fact, it must be true.

We believe not in any resurrection, for resurrection means rising again. We believe rather in the rise of a soul at death, not in its going down and coming back again, but in its ascent, in its taking the next step forward and onward towards its final destiny.

One point more, and the group of subjects which I wish to comprehend under this one general theme will be completed; and that is the question of the last judgment.

This, also, has been a part of both Jewish and of Christian thought. The Christian world has held it, preached it, sung it, from the very first. And it preaches and sings it to-day. At this second coming, the good and the bad are to be raised. If they have been in heaven, they are temporarily to leave the place of the blessed. If they have been in hell, they are to have this moment's reprieve. A great white throne is to be set in the heavens. Christ, the tender, the blessed, having now put aside his tenderness, except for those who have believed in him, is to be the judge, sitting on that throne. All the people who have ever lived are to be gathered at this last great assize, and they are to stand before this bar. The books are to be opened. The long centuries' work of the recording angel, who is supposed to have made a record of every thought, every feeling, every word, every action of every man, woman, and child who ever





lived, from the time they were born until they died, is to be read. How real this picture was made, and is still made, to the alarmed consciousness and imagination of millions, I can witness to from the memories of my own childhood. One of the earliest things that I can remember is the picture of this great white throne, with the judge upon it; and I supposed through all my childhood that everything I thought, or ever felt or ever did, was in some miraculous way, as in an instant, with the swiftness of a flash of lightning, to be laid open and made plain to the assembled universe, and I to be overwhelmed with that revelation, or else to have it blotted out and covered out of sight by the atoning blood of the Redeemer. That was the alternative with which my childish mind was filled. And that is the picture to-day in the fancy of millions of Christendom.

But we have learned not that there is no judgment day. We have learned that all days are judgment days. We have learned that every thought makes its invisible record, every feeling leaves its trace, every deed stands a part of the accomplished fact of human history. And we know that the law of cause and effect is so unintermittent, so efficient, so constant, that, if the world were stopped at this instant, there would be in the result at that moment of time the complete summing up, good and bad, of all that was. Every day, then, is a judgment day. Every cause issues in its legitimate, its inevitable effect; and we must stand before the question of our destiny the result of all we have been, and must look forward to a future to be dominated by what we are, or to be a new starting-point for what we shall be.

## THE DESTINY OF THE SOUL.

---

IN treating this theme, I shall follow the plan already adopted, and give you, first, some of the views that have been held by the old faiths, and that are still in the creeds, and then try to suggest my own hope. For here, as you will understand, I shall not claim to speak with authority. I only make this claim: that I shall say nothing that any knowledge contradicts, or seems likely to contradict, and shall keep myself within the bounds of what seems to me, after years of careful study and reflection, reasonable.

The writer of the second chapter of Genesis tells us that God created man in his own image out of the dust of the ground, and then breathed into this dust-made man the breath of life; and he became a living soul. Readers ordinarily understand these words, "living soul," to convey the idea of an immortal principle immediately communicated to this fleshly body by the inbreathing spirit of God. And yet these words determine nothing. The Hebrew term here translated "soul" is used also in other places to stand for the vital principle of the lower animal life, and therefore cannot of necessity be taken as definitely asserting anything concerning the nature of this life or its duration. The older part of the Old Testament, representing, doubtless, the original thought and feeling of the Hebrew race, contains not even a hint of immortality. And, in later days, we know that the two great sects into which the Jews were divided,

the Sadducees and the Pharisees, differed mainly concerning this belief. The Sadducees held to the divine authority only of the Pentateuch, claiming to stand by the original writings of Moses, and declaring that they did not believe in angel or spirit; while the Pharisees, who were the progressive sect, the popular party in the nation, accepted the traditions and the later ideas, and so had come to believe in angel and spirit and in the continued existence of the soul. The first intimation of anything like a future life that we find in the Old Testament, in the order of Hebrew thought, is in the Book of Job; and here it is pictured as something far from desirable,—a land of darkness and confusion, of spirits in an underground, cavernous abode, away from the light of day, existing, but hardly living. This was, perhaps, the first faint feeling of something better than that to come.

But after the Jews came into contact with the religion of the Persians, during their captivity, they seem to have largely borrowed these foreign ideas, and to have adopted the belief in an angelic hierarchy, in heaven with its court and messengers, and in that which naturally followed and went with it,—the belief in the continued existence of the individual soul. And this was undoubtedly a wide-spread and popular belief at the time that Jesus became a teacher of his people; and Jesus himself very plainly shares it.

In the early Christian centuries, this thought came to be so overmastering a faith as to dominate and belittle this life till it became hardly more than the vestibule of eternity. Paul goes so far as to say that it is hardly worth while to take any trouble about these matters. If a man is single, it is hardly worth while to marry, the change is coming so soon. If a man is married already, even to an unbeliever, it is hardly worth while to be troubled about it. Certainly, it is not worth while for a slave to fret about getting his

freedom. It is not worth while to accumulate wealth. All these earthly affairs become of slight account, because the shadow of eternity overhangs the earth. In all the early Christian centuries, then, this life was of small account ; and the other was everything.

I need to stop here for a little to tell you that it has been an important problem on the part of Christian theologians to decide as to the origin of the soul. They have questioned as to when it came into existence, and when it became connected with its physical companion. I speak of this because it has an important bearing on a point I wish to make a little later, and because it has been raised over and over again as an objection against our modern thought. I have been asked, If man is developed from the lower forms of life on earth, when and how comes in the immortal part of him, if he has an immortal part? The persons who raise these objections seem to think that this is a new difficulty that holds against the theory of evolution, but that was not felt by those who clung to the old beliefs. I wish, therefore, to point out the fact that this was an important theme of speculation on the part of the old theologians.

There were three different views held by as many different classes of adherents.

The first believed that all souls had existed previously to their connection with the body, and that each soul entered this bodily tenement during the time preceding or at the period of birth. Then there was a party who believed that God created each individual soul, for each body, during the time preceding or at the moment of birth. The third party believed that the soul equally with the body, all the characteristics and qualities that made up the man, were transmitted from parent to child. Thus this subject exercised men's speculative powers in old times, and divided the Christian Church into parties this way and that.

But, however man came to possess a soul or to be a soul, it has been taught by the Christian Church, practically through its whole history, that this life was only a probation, that men were placed here on this earth during a certain period of trial. They were to be tested to see who of them would stand the test,—who would prove himself fitted for the immortal career. And yet, strangely enough, the larger part of the Protestant world, at least, has held that this question was decided before the worlds were made, so that it seems to me it takes all significance out of the idea of there being any probation. Augustine, Calvin, and all the long line of their followers, from the early ages until to-day,—those who believed in fore-ordination and election,—of course believe that this probation here on earth is only a matter of form. It is settled before a soul is born as to whether it is to be an inhabitant of the regions of light or of darkness.

As to the destiny of these souls after the period of probation is passed, there have been several schools of thought within the limits of Christendom. Origen represents a large body of thinkers in the early Church who could not accept the idea of an eternal hell, and so believed that after a period of suffering all souls would at last be restored to the divine favor. They were called Restorationists, from this fact. Then the Catholic Church, besides having its final abode for the blessed and its final abode for the damned, has had, as you know, a place — purgatory — where those who were not good enough for heaven or bad enough for hell have been allowed, through longer or shorter periods of penal suffering, to purge away the sins that had stained them here, and become fit for final blessedness in the presence of God.

The Swedenborgians have held to the belief in a limited number of hells and heavens · and their hells have been un-

like those of other Protestant beliefs. They held that souls gravitated downward or upward according to their predominant character and choice, and that even those in hell, although shut out from the light and the blessedness of God, are not in that torment which has been taught by the greater part of Christendom. They have chosen evil, and evil has become their good, so that perhaps the punishment to which they are subjected is chiefly privative or negative in its quality. They are cut off and shut out from blessedness, and still find a kind of satisfaction in going their own way. But, as you are aware, it is the great Protestant doctrine that the moment the breath has left the body the question as to the destiny of the soul is settled, settled forever. There have been men and women on the edge of heresy, if not over the border, who would believe that the souls of the evil might possibly be annihilated at death. Dr. Bushnell taught something very nearly like this. His tender soul could not bear the old burden; and so he held that the sinful soul—sin being in its nature a kind of death—that was cast out from heaven would shrivel and shrink, gradually losing the power even of suffering, and, being shut out forever from God, would continue still to exist, but would be incapable of either much pleasure or pain. But the great majority have held that, when the soul left the body, its destiny was settled forever.

I would like to call your attention—I refer to it because I believe that those who are not familiar with it will be glad to know that there is such a book—to a volume, by Rev. S. J. Barrows, entitled *The Doom of the Majority*. It grew out of a controversy which he had with Rev. Dr. Withrow. Mr. Barrows had made the statement, in the *Christian Register*, that Orthodoxy taught that the great majority of souls were lost. Dr. Withrow denied the truth of that state-

ment ; and this book is the result of that controversy. I wish to read to you two or three brief passages from this book, as bearing on this subject and on another which we need to remember still exists in almost all the creeds,—in all the old creeds, at least. I suppose that, if you should tell almost any orthodox clergyman in America to-day that the Church believed in the damnation of infants, he would be indignant at the charge. And yet the belief in anything but this is so very modern that we may say that it is the result of the tender revolt of the human heart against what it would no longer bear.

“We especially desire to know from this venerable Synod whether it acknowledges as its own doctrine, and the doctrine of the Church, particularly what is asserted . . . concerning the creation of the larger part of mankind for destruction, the reprobation of infants, even though born of believing parents.”

The Synod referred to was the famous Synod of Dort. The Swiss theologians at Dort answer, “That there is an *election and reprobation of infants* no less than of adults, we cannot deny in the face of God who loves and *hates unborn children.*”

I wish to quote just one other passage :—

“As the eggs of the asp are deservedly crushed, and serpents just born are deservedly killed, though they have not yet poisoned any one with their bite, so infants are justly obnoxious to penalties.”

I could quote you passages similar to this from the old authorities by the hour.

There is a famous poem by Rev. Michael Wigglesworth, one of the old colonial clergymen, in which he treats this question most seriously, though it reads now like a parody. In one place, he speaks of the damnation of infants, and

says the nature they possess is a crime, and that they cannot hope to dwell in heaven; but, as they have not committed such great sins as many who have lived on earth, God will perhaps assign to them "the easiest room in hell."

James Freeman Clarke, in his *Orthodoxy: Its Truths and Errors*, quotes from a Roman Catholic book an extract which is too horrible to read, on the damnation of infants. I will only refer you to it. It is found in a note on page 360.\*

The Presbyterian Confession of Faith, representing Presbyterians both in Europe and America, published by the hundreds and thousands still and scattered in all the churches, says explicitly that elect infants are regenerate and saved; and the next article says those that are not elect cannot be saved, etc.

The destiny of the great majority, even of infants, from the beginning of the world until the end is wrapped thus in impenetrable shadow, overhung by cloud and darkness and horror, from which we gladly turn away. I shall not this morning even attempt to argue against this belief. I will simply say that, though it were written clearly in every page of the Bible from beginning to end, I would still believe that such a Bible was a libel on my Father who is in heaven,

\* "To show how some *Roman Catholics* write in the middle of the nineteenth century, we quote the following from a Roman Catholic book, published in England, by Rev. J. Furniss, being especially "a book for children." Wishing to spare our readers such horrors, we put it here, advising no one of weak nerves to read its atrocious descriptions:—

"The fourth dungeon is "the boiling kettle." Listen: there is a sound like that of a kettle boiling. Is it really a kettle which is boiling? No. Then what is it? Hear what it is. The blood is boiling in the scalded veins of that boy; the brain is boiling and bubbling in his head; the marrow is boiling in his bones. The fifth dungeon is the "red-hot oven," in which is a *little child*. Hear how it screams to come out; see how it turns and twists itself about in the fire; it beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor of the oven. To this child God was very good. Very likely God saw that this child would get worse and worse, and would never repent, and so it would have to be punished *much more* in hell. So God in his mercy called it out of the world in its early childhood."



—that it issued not from him, but that some enemy of his had done it.

As to the destiny of the saved, I need detain you with hardly a word. The old picture of heaven as a place simply of rest, of song, of worship, does not seem attractive to us in the modern world. Now and then there are certain pictures of it which are even repulsive.

Lactantius, the old church Father, foreshadowed the belief of some more modern theologians. He represented Christians as looking down into the place of the damned, and laughing and exulting over their torments. But we must remember, in excuse for him,—for he was not inhuman,—that he lived during a period of bitter persecution; and he was simply flinging this as a weapon at the heads of his enemies, hoping that some time the tables would be turned, and that they who were now torturing would themselves be tormented, while their victims would then be in peace. It seems to me that, in abatement of what would be too inhuman in him, we need to remember this. A good many modern theologians have gone so far as to say not only that a mother might be perfectly happy though her favorite son were in hell, but that even it would be a part of the joy of those who were with God to show sympathy with his judgment, and to take positive delight in whatever he had done, even though it were the inflicting of torture upon the lost. I take it here, again, these men were not all inhuman. It was simply an extraordinary effort by which they were trying to get themselves so in sympathy with what they believed God was going justly to do as to find no fault with it, even to see that all was and must be right.

I turn now to hint some things which seem to me rational, by way of hope as we look out towards the future. It is not a part of my purpose even to touch on the question of the

proofs for immortality. I have done that more than once, and I may do it more than once again; but it is not a part of my present plan. I shall assume it.

In the first place, I wish to say a word as to the possible origin of this immortal self of ours along the lines of development which men like Herbert Spencer and Darwin have made clear to the thought of our modern life.

The first form of force, the lowest form of force of which we know anything, is what we call the physical force under our feet. Next above it is chemical force. Next above chemical force comes the life-force in the lower plants and the lower animals. Then this climbs up—we know not how, but we know that it has done it—into that which constitutes man, not only into this life-force of the body, but the power of thought, the power of self-consciousness, the ability to say “I.” It is my belief that we can hold to the thought that along this line of development there has come to pass at last the birth of immortal spirit, without there being any break in the chain. So far as we know, there is no one of the lower animals, none of the lower forms of life, that possesses what we call self-conscious individuality. There is no reason to suppose that the horse or the dog ever even thought, I am a horse, I am a dog, or I am I. There is no reason to suppose that even the most intelligent animals have ever risen to the point of self-consciousness in this sense. I believe that all these life-forces, the forces that we speak of as without life, all the forces there are in the universe, are just so much a part of the manifestation of the infinite and universal spirit of life that we call God. But, when climbing along these lines of development, it comes at last in man to this self-conscious individuality. Then I believe that here is something, still a part of God, still dependent on him, linking to him as child to parent forever, and still

something capable of walking alone, of being itself, of continuing itself through uncounted time. I believe that the very soul and essence of this immortal spirit of ours is this self-conscious individuality, which has come to birth, so far as we know, only in man. We do not know where it is in these bodies. We cannot locate this fact of life, this power of thought, of feeling, of affection, of love; but we know that it is, and we know that it is, in such a magnificent sweep of power, that we can say it, and it only, is the self. We never think of the body as ourself. These hands are not I: they are my hands. This head is not I, even the brain: it is my brain. Every part, every organ I own, I use; they are not I. I am somewhere here, I know not where or how; but I live, and I use the body. It is sometimes supposed to be an unanswerable objection to the continued existence of the soul that thought depends upon the brain, and that the brain ceases to be alive at death. And yet is it any more wonderful to suppose that this same I may pass to, and inform, some other brain, constructed of some finer material than we know of at present, than it is to suppose what we actually know to be true,—that the mind keeps using not the same substance in the brain, but assimilating and casting off material day by day the whole life long? I keep my own self-conscious individuality, I keep my identity, I remember what happened last year, what happened in my childhood. Where is the record? It is not in the same brain that I had when a child; for there is not a particle of my childhood brain beneath this dome to-day, there is not a particle perhaps of the brain which I had last year. Somewhere I keep myself. Can the objector tell me where? I believe, then, that it is perfectly rational to suppose that there may be an ethereal—not immaterial but material—body inside this one, corresponding to it part by part. That

is one theory. Or there may be some as yet unknown way by which my thought acts upon and creates the possibility of continuing its identity in connection with other finer etherealized particles of matter, so that, when I escape this body, I am I, the same. Something of this kind I believe.

I cannot stop this morning to argue concerning theories. I simply express my own faith. I believe that I shall continue to exist, walk out of this body as out of a house no longer inhabited, but still not houseless. I believe that the next life will be a real life, as real as the present one. Spirit, formless, invisible, intangible, inaudible, means to me nothing. We are already sufficiently acquainted with the substance out of which worlds are made to gain glimpses of forms of matter, of methods of existence, beyond us,—we know not in what subtle or what countless forms. I believe, then, that the next life will be real,—not ghostly, not ghostly, not thin, shadowy, unreal, not a life with the blood out, not a life with the nerve out, not a life with all the pulsing power that makes us feel glad to be alive here faded, drained, departed. We know enough of this material universe even now to be sure beyond question of the fact that the mightiest of all forces are the invisible and the intangible ones. I believe, then, in a real, pulsing, thrilling, throbbing life, as much beyond and above what we know here as chemical power is beyond the dead earth beneath it, as the lower forms of life are beyond the chemical power, as man is above the lower animal life. I believe that God takes no step backward, and, as we step out and upward, we reach a higher plane and a higher grade of life in every respect.

Shall we remember? Shall we be cognizant of the lives of those we have left behind? I take up thus one or two of these questions only to give my opinion, because every little while people say to me, "If, after I leave this body, I

must still know the suffering of those I have left behind, I cannot understand how there could be any heaven for me." Consider for a moment. Would you, if you could, drink the Lethe stream, forget, go off into some blissful bower merely for the sake of your own ease, and not know what your friends whom you left behind are going through? I do not know what your conception of heaven may be like, but mine includes remembrance, knowing, if I may, carrying, or at least mitigating, the woes and sorrows of those I have left behind. I would know every pang and heartache of my friends here, and would, if I might, come back and minister to them. If I could not do that, I should find no pleasure in forgetfulness; and I cannot understand how any heart that is not selfish could even dream of wishing to go away for the sake of its own ease, beyond the sound of the sighs of those whom they have once tenderly loved.

Another question. Shall we all be mingled together in that other life as we have been here, the good and the bad together? I received, not long ago, a letter from a lady, saying that she understood me to mean that, and that, if I did, she could not understand how there could be any happiness there. I believe still again here that there will be the same freedom of association that there is in this life, and that the good and the bad will be together, in that sense. And I, for my part, do not want any other kind of heaven than that. I think there is more religion in the old pagan's prayer than in that selfish desire to get off out of sight and sound of disagreeable things, that one may have a good time by himself. The old pagan said,—I do not quote *verbatim*: O God, never will I enter into peace alone. So long as there is any sorrow, any sin, any tears, I will not enter into any heaven of rest, though the threshold invite me and the door be open for my coming.

Now, as to the destiny of these souls, of the moral qualities and characteristics of this continued existence, I have some important principles to outline. It seems to me that the old belief of the Universalists — which I touch not to controvert, because I suppose very few hold it to-day — is, on the face of it, an absurdity. They believed that through the merits of Christ not a part, but all men, were to be saved, and that everybody at death, through some miraculous change, was fitted for this new condition. If we have learned anything about this universe, it is this : that it is one God, one law, in all worlds. We have found out, through the use of the spectroscope, that even the most distant star is composed of the same materials as this we tread under our feet. This earth is as much in the heavens as Sirius ; and there is no up or down, no bad or better or worst, so far as its condition is concerned,—the same universe, the same one power controlling all. Is it not rational, then, to suppose that, when we die, it is simply like the sleep of the night? A man sails across the equator, which is an imaginary line. He is the same man on the south side that he was five minutes before on the north side. A man passes out of the year 1887 into the year 1888, which is again a purely imaginary line ; and on the first morning of 1888 he stands the same, resultant of the inherited influences of the past, and all that he has moulded them into by his own thought, feeling, and deed. And so I believe that, the first moment of conscious existence beyond what we call death, we shall find that we are just ourselves ; that we have waked up as we went to sleep ; that we have only passed through an open doorway, and are what we were before,—only the conditions will be changed, circumstances will be altered. And here comes in the force of that warning,—a warning which, it seems to me, we must sound,—the echo of those words of Jesus that are not yet outgrown,

"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." In other words, get ready for those conditions that are to come, that you may not find yourselves ushered into a state of existence for which you are entirely unprepared. Consider what we are likely to carry with us over yonder. We cannot carry our money. We shall carry very little of our local reputation. We shall carry very few of those things that constitute the great interests and cares of the majority of men and women. It is these eternal qualities, what we call the spiritual qualities, of love, of tenderness, of pity, of service; it is the good we have done, the good we have thought of, the good, at any rate, that we have planned and attempted; it is these spiritual and moral qualities which are eternal; it is that which does not depend on this earth, which does not depend on this physical body, which does not depend on the kind of society we have lived in,—it is this eternal part of us that we carry with us. And, if we find ourselves flung suddenly into the midst of these changed conditions, without any training, without any forethought, without any fitness for them, with none of the spiritual faculties born or developed, it seems to me that there will be hell enough for any of us. Omar Khayyám, the famous Persian poet, says,—

"I sent my Soul through the Invisible,  
Some letter of that after-life to spell;  
And by and by my Soul returned to me,  
And answered, 'I myself am heaven and hell.'"

Miss Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, in one of her books, has outlined in dramatic and most rational fashion the possible suffering of a soul cast into the midst of this spiritual companionship, with none of the spiritual faculties developed or in any way fitted for the kind of life that it was there called upon to lead.

I have not time to deal with these phases of this picture of life as I would like to. I must touch as rapidly as I can on one or two other points, and leave the subject suggested, not treated.

I know that there are states of mind into which many of us, perhaps all of us, fall, when it seems to us that immortality would be a burden. I have friends who say to me, "I look forward to the thought of continued existence year after year, century after century, æon after æon, and am appalled, and turn away and sigh for rest." Yet I believe that Tennyson put eternal meaning into those words which, though now trite, I must quote again :—

" Whatever crazy sorrow saith,  
No life that breathes with human breath  
Hath ever truly long'd for death.

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
O life, not death, for which we pant ;  
More life, and fuller, that I want."

It is life,—life free from trammel, free from burden, free from hampering conditions ; a life of attainment after effort, not of discouragement and failure ; a life where the conditions are such that we can grasp the things we long for, and where we can cherish unclouded and eternal hope. This would not weary. I believe, then, that we may look forward to two or three definite and distinct hopes. I think we may trust that we shall throw off with these bodies many of the disabilities, hindrances, that are often too much for us here, and find ourselves freer, better able to cope with the conditions of life there, finding at our feet, as I believe we shall, the lowest round of a ladder the upper end of which is at the foot of the throne of God. I do not believe that there is a place in any world, or that there will be any time in any



world, when any soul may not, if it will, take hold of God's hand and begin to climb, climbing unto better things on the "stepping-stones of our dead selves."

Again, I look forward to that life as one where there will be freedom of choice of companionship, of association, as there is not here ; where we may find not only in one little society, but in all worlds, those of kin to us, and rejoice in the sunshine of their eternal fellowship, unhampered by question or criticism of relations as here, seeking out those who can lift us and help us and lead us on. Socrates pictures to himself the joy of converse with the famous men of old. May we not look forward to something like to that ? I do not believe that the poets cease to sing over yonder, that musicians compose grand symphonies no more, that the hands or imaginations of artists grow weary. It seems to me that all these high and fine things that the great ones of the earth have wrought for our joy, our culture, our uplifting, may be wrought in fuller and higher degree over yonder, and that the resources of these souls of ours shall prove to be unlimited and the field exhaustless.

And, then, study. Agassiz, Darwin, Giordano Bruno, Galileo, Kepler,—these great men who have loved to look into the secrets of the universe, have loved, as Kepler expresses it, "to think over God's thoughts after him," have loved to trace the origin and growth and significance of things,—I do not believe that such faculties as theirs shall tire. When the faculties with which we are laboring are tireless, and when not only one planet, but all worlds, are the field, and all time is before us, think what the souls of men may achieve !

And, then, just a hint in passing. There is no reason that we know of for supposing that our five senses exhaust the universe. There may be forms and phases that will call

for the use of ten or fifteen or a hundred senses; and they may be called out to meet and respond to the need.

But, beyond and above all these things, I believe that that which is divinest in us will continue to be divinest there,—love, help. Two souls that care for each other in this world, joining forces of thought and hand to help any soul that needs,—is not this the nearest approach that we can picture to heaven while here? Will there be call for that over yonder? I cannot doubt it. I do not believe that this planet is the only world in which men have been born, in which a school for souls has been set up, in which men and women are learning how to live their lives through that process that we call sin and failure. For aught we know, worlds like this may be scattered through space. For aught any one knows, in parts of the universe where now are only *nebulae*, there may be worlds building out of this star-cloud, and forms of life may be developed there, as here thousands and thousands of years ago; and the life history of this world may be re-enacted millions of times, so that there may be field forever for those who love to help their fellow-men to play the grandest part of which I can dream, the part of stepping from heaven, even the highest heaven, if any soul may attain that, to take the hand of the lowest, feeblest, most sinful being, even though it were in the murk of hell, to lift and lead and comfort and encourage, to see a soul blossom under one's care as one watches a flower in his garden, to help God in the work of creating those who shall be fit for the beatific and eternal vision.

These as hints, fragments, reaching out towards a life concerning which we must say, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man" to picture it. We know not what we shall be; but more and more we shall be "like him."

## If you are Right, How does it happen that Every One does not agree with you?

---

I HAVE an aunt in the country, who is a most firm adherent of the old faith; and she has put into terse and idiomatic English this question concerning me, which is broader than she thinks, and which applies to the whole liberal movement,—indeed, to every new movement in all the world and throughout all time. And she is not the only one who has given expression to it. She said to one of my relatives, not a great while ago: “If Minot is right, how does it happen that everybody else does not hold the same opinions? Here are educated men in all professions, here are thousands of clergymen who have been trained for their special work, here are people, surely, with as much brain power as he has, people with as broad an education, people who are to be credited with as free a mind, and who ought to hold themselves as open to convictions of truth; and yet they not only do not hold his opinions, but they are radically opposed to them. If he is right, how does this happen?”

This is a fair question; and it demands a fair, earnest, honest answer. The presumption, as you notice, is that, in all ordinary controversies of this sort, the truth is more likely to lie with the majority. If a person chooses to entertain ideas that are either new or peculiar, are not the chances against his being right? Is it not likely that these are mere

personal whims, and that the great majority of the world may still be followed with more safety? The chances are that they may. It cannot be denied that, at least in all the ordinary concerns of life, the majority is more likely to be in the right than the minority, however respectable that minority may be. There is a saying which, because it sums up the common-sense judgment of the world, has passed into a proverb: Everybody is wiser than anybody. Concerning the ordinary occupations, ordinary thoughts, the ordinary business of life, I should advise you always to go with the majority, or, at any rate, unless there came to me some special reason that seemed to me strong enough to turn the scale the other way. A path that is open and clear, that has been trodden for hundreds and hundreds of years, is a path that at least has an outcome to it and that leads people somewhere, or it would not thus have been trodden. And if some one comes to you, and invites you to leave this clear path that has carried people in safety, and asks you to follow him on some trail that appears to lead into and be lost in the wilderness, you are wise, at least, to hesitate and ask a few questions, and wait for proof. So the person who holds this position is likely to be right. You are wiser, in all ordinary cases, to follow the open streets of the city. If you choose to take some cross-cut, some by-way, and your eyes are open, you will see the sign, "Private way, dangerous." You can follow it, if you please; but you must do it on your own responsibility, and look carefully to your going.

And yet consider for a moment the kind of world we live in and the kind of being man has been in the past and is still,—a universe to the first man absolutely unknown, he born into it a child, opening his eyes, beginning to ask questions that on every hand baffled him so that he was not able

to answer them. Consider the human race beginning in this way, yet making some progress year after year and age after age. Always along the lines of this progress there must be times when some one individual, through a finer development of brain, a wider development of faculty, a keener insight, catches a glimpse of some new truth, sees further, sees more clearly than his fellows, so that in his case, at any rate, it comes to be true that this particular somebody is wiser than everybody. Had it not been true, where would the race have been to-day? We all started on the borderland of the animal in the jungle, wild, naked, men of the woods, feeding on the rough products of uncultivated nature; and so we have come to be what we are. How has it been done? It has been done by somebody's seeing a new truth concerning this infinite mystery that is still so largely unsolved. It has come to pass, then, that men here and there, or little groups of people, have been wiser than all the past, have heard the command of God, have thought that it was their duty to echo that command, and have so embodied the truth that it claimed the allegiance of every human soul. And is it not true, has it not been true always, that, while the common sense, as we call it, the sense that people have in common,—because it is the result of the common experience of the world,—is the safest guide in regard to common, ordinary things of life, the minority, and a very small minority at that, is and has been right in regard to life's higher things? How is it to-day in science? Would you take the opinions of the majority of people or the opinions of the few? Has it not been true in our own day that two men, and two alone in all the world, and those two unacquainted with each other,—Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace,—were the only two on earth who held anything like a correct theory of the origin and growth of life on this planet? The

majority is coming to it; but it did happen that it was a very small minority — a minority of two — that was right, and all the world else was wrong.\*

How is it in art? If you were going to buy a valuable picture, would you trust to the opinions of the crowd, or would you select some one of special taste and cultivation and aptness in this direction? Is it not true that the opinions of the few here, and that a very few, ought to outweigh the world?

How is it in education? It is always the minority that is specially educated in regard to the highest and most important things, and so in every department of life concerning those things of highest import, most difficult of apprehension; and so it seems to me concerning this highest of all and most difficult of all, religion, it may be considered an open question whether the opinion of the minority is not more likely to be the correct opinion.

As throwing some practical light on this subject, let us glance at a few historic examples. When Moses set himself up as a leader of a new religious movement, what were the chances? Think of the self-complacent sneers of the aristocracy and the priesthood of Egypt. Here, they said, is a fellow who has learned all that he does know from us. We have let him into a few of the secrets of our ancient learning; and now, forsooth, he claims to be wiser than all of us! If Moses was right, why did not all Egypt follow him in sympathy, instead of with an army bent on his destruction? Here was a civilization that had been standing for thousands of years, a civilization that ever since that day has been one of the wonders of the earth: how did it happen, if Moses was right, that all those people were so bitterly opposed to him?

Come down to the time when Isaiah and the great leading,

\* Herbert Spencer should be added, so making three.

•

flaming prophets of that age came to the people with their new and grander visions of truth : how did it happen that so few were ready to even listen to them? If they were right, why were not the people ready to hear? As a matter of fact, we know that it is only the nobler civilizations, that have come centuries later than their time, that have been able to appreciate the worth of the finest and most inspired utterances of those noble men.

When Jesus came to preach his new gospel, how did it happen, if he was right, if he was so much in advance of his time, that the people did not follow him? Did they not sneer at him: "Why, this is Jesus of Nazareth and of Galilee! No prophet ever came out of Galilee, much less out of a little village like Nazareth. And how knoweth this man letters, having never learned? And is not his father this carpenter Joseph? and is not his mother Mary just a common woman, like the rest of us?" This was the spirit in which he was received; yet the world to-day looks at the ideal of Jesus as a star leading, but as yet unapproachable, and that only the finest and highest civilization of the world can ever realize. And, when Paul started out to preach his gospel, how did it happen that the very disciples of Jesus, those who had listened to his own words, who had had the opportunity of drinking in his spirit, followed Paul, as we know they did, from town to town and city to city, warning the people against him, and saying, He preaches new and fanatical and dangerous doctrines, to which you must not listen; he has departed from the faith of his Master? And, in later times,—to mention them all would be to mention every leader of the world,—Savonarola in Florence,—if he was right, why did not the people of Florence hear him instead of burning him? Huss, Wyclif, Martin Luther, Wesley, Ballou, the founder of the Universalists, Channing,

our own leader, Theodore Parker, who broadened and deepened the work that Channing began,—if these men were right, how does it happen that the world does not run after them? As a matter of fact, no matter what the explanation may be, we know that the pathway of human progress has been lighted by burning fagots, has been marked as by mile-stones by the tombs of leaders, prophets, martyrs,—monuments which the children have built in honor of those whom their fathers killed. It has been true always, it will be true for thousands of years, that

“By the light of burning heretics Christ’s bleeding feet I track,  
Toiling up new Calvaries ever, with the cross that turns not back ;  
And these mounts of anguish number how each generation learned  
One new word of that grand Credo which in prophet-hearts hath burned  
Since the first man stood, God-conquered, with his face to heaven up-  
turned.

“Count me o’er earth’s chosen heroes : they were souls that stood alone,  
While the men they agonized for hurled the contumelious stone,—  
Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam incline  
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,  
By one man’s plain truth to manhood and to God’s supreme design.”

I propose now to ask your serious consideration of what seem to me a few of the adequate causes for this method of human progress. I offer you a few, out of many reasons, why, if any man, or any church, or any set of men be right, everybody else does not at once agree with him or them.

1. In the first place, I wish to call your attention to a fact, I think generally overlooked, that even the capacity for thought has a physical basis in the brain ; and that thought, like any other one of the great forces of the universe, follows the line of least resistance. If you pour out water on sloping ground, you find a perfect illustration of this. It



will follow the lines of least resistance. The water will flow around obstacles and seek out the course that calls for the least expenditure of force. Now, every thought is accompanied—we know enough of science to understand this—by certain molecular movements in the brain; and we may well enough and accurately enough picture to ourselves the channels like a pathway worn by the treading of many feet, so that it is very easy for thought to run along these lines. And it is always an effort on the part of most men, and sometimes an effort so painful that they are not willing to put themselves to the trouble, to wear out a new channel of thought, and think along new lines. And, indeed, this matter goes so far in many cases as to be a practical impossibility, for at least a time. You are aware, perhaps, of the fact that missionaries, as they have gone to certain lower tribes of the world with their new thoughts, have found it simply impossible to express certain ideas so that they could be comprehended. Why? For the simple reason that the people had never entertained those ideas, they had not even developed a brain capacity for entertaining them. For you must understand that the development of the brain and the development of thought—and so of language which expresses thought—must keep step forever. If there is a new thought, there is a development of the brain that matches it, there is a word to give it utterance; and, if people have never entertained the thought, it is possible that there is no brain capacity for entertaining it,—they have no place to put it.

To illustrate what I mean,—and this illustration, though a humorous one, is most serious in its reach and scope and significance,—I remember a witty, shrewd, and very wise saying of that famous old black woman who during the war went by the name of Sojourner Truth, one of the most elo-

quent tongues brought out by that disturbed period of our history. She knew nothing of her parents, nothing of her name, nothing of her age; yet she spoke as one inspired. In the presence of some friends one day, she looked at one of those light-headed, thoughtless girls, all well enough in their way, yet having nothing serious about them, and not being developed enough to have even the possibility of entertaining serious thought, as though she wanted to speak to her; but, with a little sigh she let it pass, and turning to her friend, with a humorous smile on her face, said, "I'd a tole dat chile sunthin', only I see she'd no place to put it." There are thousands of people in the world to whom, though you try to tell them things,—new thoughts, new ideas,—you are like waves that beat in vain against some impervious cliff; for they have no place to put them.

2. There is another reason. With most people, religious as well as social and political ideas are inherited in the same sense as is the color of their hair or eyes, or the capacity to understand music or art. Most children rightly and naturally adopt the ideas of the family into which they are born, the ideas of father and mother and neighbors whom they hear talk. By the time they are seventeen years of age, or from there to twenty, when they go out into the world into business, they have never thought, have never studied, have never considered any of these questions. They read only the newspapers or novels, or books in which they casually become interested, give no independent original thought to any of these questions. And it is no fault of theirs: the great majority of people have no time for these things; or, at any rate, their attention is not called to them in a way that impresses upon them the seriousness and importance of their giving any thought,—for I really suppose it is true that most people could find time to think, if they

understood that it was of any serious importance to them. I clipped from the *Transcript* last evening some words, a few of which I wish to read to you as bearing on this point, because they may come to you with more force than from a minister who is understood to be pleading a cause. They are from Mr. Chauncey M. Depew, in a speech at the New York Press Club's banquet: "I venture to predict—and I can prove it, if necessary—that, of the two million inhabitants of this town, not over two hundred ever think at all. They talk about business which they understand. They talk about the things they do, about their family, about their church, about their minister; but it is all shop. It has not in it a single creation, a single origination of their own. They have lost the power of original thought."

So much Depew. I shall be inclined to say, not that they have lost the power of original thought, but that they have not developed it. You cannot lose what you do not possess.

The great majority, then, of the world has not been trained to independent and original thought in these directions; and this fact is one of the most important points in answer to this question as to why the great majority of people do not at once embrace new and advanced ideas.

3. Another important point. Most people, to my certain knowledge,—I only need to remember my own experience to comprehend this,—not only inherit certain religious ideas, and live such lives as do not call upon them for any new thought concerning them; but they are definitely and persistently trained, as the Chinese train and clip and cut the products of their gardens into particular shapes. Children are trained to believe that these ideas are right; and it is enforced upon them morning and night, and on Sundays week after week, year after year. They are made to believe

that these religious ideas which their fathers have entertained are the true ones. Not only that, but they are taught at home, in the Sunday-school, in the religious newspapers, and in the religious reviews which they come to look over in later life, from the pulpit persistently, not only that these ideas are true, but that it is wicked for any one to question their correctness. They are taught that the only supreme virtue on the earth is faith,—faith in the sense of blind acceptance of what you are told, not faith in that grander sense in which it is used in the New Testament, for the New Testament never teaches any such thing as this. It is a perversion of what Jesus and Paul taught. They are taught that doubt is the only dangerous sin; that doubt (I have heard it preached, and you have probably) is a more dangerous sin than any other that a man can possibly be guilty of. He may commit any crime; but, so long as he holds to the correct theory of the plan of salvation, there will be opportunity for him to return and be forgiven. But, if he doubt, then every pathway is closed.

4. Not only is this true concerning the common people: it is true concerning clergymen,—true in their case with an emphasis. When I was passing through my theological career, it was impressed upon me, not that I was to search fearlessly and simply all over the world to find the truth and abide by it, but that I was to be a sort of theological West Point student, being trained into fitness for position as a subordinate officer of this grand army, and I was to go out and fight for and defend these opinions, through thick and thin, my life long. That is the kind of teaching most young men have received in their preparatory studies for the pulpit. Is that a good preparation for their acceptance of new ideas?

5. The religious environment of people. How is it in regard to most people who accept what are called evangeli-

cal ideas? Most people, as you are aware, judge the world by their own door-yard, or the immediate circle that makes up their own mental horizon. They do not hear the other side. They are taught only one side. They take only their denominational newspaper, which represents what they believe. They take only the denominational review. They hear their own views alone preached and taught and talked. Why should they change? Why should they adopt the ideas of people whose thoughts are suspicious, and who are in the wrong, as they have always been taught? I know ministers, doctors of divinity, who say frankly to friends that they never allow themselves to read anything which would tend to disturb their opinions. One of the most famous of the Presbyterian doctors of divinity of America told a friend of mine, another doctor of divinity, a few years ago, that he did not consider any book written since the seventeenth century worth his time to read. If a man lives in the Middle Ages, why should he not hold Middle Age theology? What else can you expect of him? This, then, is the kind of environment in which people live, and in which they grow.

6. And now I must touch on one other point of immense practical importance, which is producing to-day a mass of dishonesty, of which people are conscious or semi-conscious, that is simply appalling. This is the matter of self-interest, as it turns on the question of the beliefs you will hold. Suppose you go to England. All the social prestige of England, all its instituted and inherited traditions, all its organized wealth, are with the Establishment. If a man chooses to step out of the Established Church in England and become a dissenter, he loses caste, he loses social position. Suppose a young clergyman chooses to follow his convictions, and steps out of the pulpit,—not into another church, for they allow nothing to be called a “church” but the Establishment, but

into a "chapel." He loses his social position, he loses the circle of friends in which he has been trained, the position which he had gained on the ladder of preferment, with possibly a bishopric at the top, perhaps Canterbury, if one have brain and ability for it. He must give up all these for the sake of being looked on as peculiar, odd, regarded with suspicion by his friends and with tears and sorrow by those who love him.

How is it in this country? I have in my hand a letter written by a school-teacher in one of the Western States, appealing to me in the most touching way as to what she ought to do. She is where there is no Unitarian or other liberal church. She has been a teacher for years, and has also been associated with the young people of the place. She has been connected with the orthodox church, and a teacher in the Sunday-school; but she has become a liberal. "What shall I do?" she asks. "I have given up my Sunday-school class, because I could not honestly teach it. If my opinions become known, I shall probably lose my position as teacher and be looked on with suspicion. Mothers will not wish their daughters under my influence, and I shall have only a life of isolation. What shall I do?"

I have here a letter from a young lawyer in Kansas, who does not dare to let it be known what his opinions are, or he would get no practice. I had a letter not long ago from another young lawyer in Kentucky, saying precisely the same thing. A friend of mine, a business man of Philadelphia, who is a good deal of a propagandist of these ideas, told me not long ago that it was fortunate for him that his business was not a local one, but was extended all over the country, for, if it were confined to that city, he would be obliged to fail or to stop talking. A leading professor in one of the great universities of this country, within three years, declined

to introduce me as a lecturer before a public audience in one of our large cities, not because he did not sympathize with me, but lest he should lose his professorship in the institution. I received a letter from an aged clergyman in Connecticut, in which he said: "I rejoice in every particle of work you are doing. I wish I could do the same; but here I am, an old man, a family dependent on me, too old to enter any new profession, too old to fight my way to a place in the old profession in a new field. I cannot speak out my heart, because it means taking the bread out of the mouths of my wife and children." In one of the cities of this State, which we call our free and glorious Commonwealth, when a new family moves into it, they are waited on by a committee, who tell them that, if they have anything to do with the Unitarian church, it may cost them their position. This at least has been true within a few years. Is it any wonder that, if you are right, everybody does not agree with you? When I look at hindrances like this that stand in the way of the advance of new thought, I wonder not that it gets on slowly, but that it ever gets on at all.

I wish now to consider one or two supplementary points. How does it happen that people look thus with suspicion and hatred upon those that differ from them as to their ideas? It is a curious fact, but a fact that we all have to recognize, that any marked difference from those about us calls out suspicion at once. We have a saying, "Better be out of the world than out of the fashion." The first time that an inventive genius made an umbrella, and appeared with it on the streets of London in a rain-storm, he was greeted with jeers, and was hooted by the crowd the whole of his walk, because nobody had ever seen such a thing before. If you choose to differ from your fellows, you must pay the penalty of being looked on with suspicion until you can prove that your position has

general utility under it. We have inherited this peculiarity from the lower animals, and cannot claim the distinction of having it to ourselves. If a hill of ants discover in their number a strange ant, one that does not look like them, they proceed to kill it at once. In almost all tribes of lower animals and birds, if there happens so unfortunate a thing—unfortunate for the victim—as for a specimen to be born that differs largely from its parents, the chances for his living to grow up are exceedingly small.\* We do not know how to account for this peculiarity; but there seems to me some reason why a person is proscribed if he dares to differ from his fellows. Do you not see what it implies? Suppose I charge you all with being in the wrong. The instinct of self-defence is roused at once. You say, Who is this upstart who charges the whole nine hundred and ninety-nine with being wrong, while he alone, the thousandth, is right? A sense of individual pride is roused. People look upon their personal opinions as in some sense their prerogative, their property; and they resent it when a man attempts to take it away from them. They have not yet learned, what I hope the world will some time be wise enough to understand, that no man has any proprietary right in anything but truth. No man has a right to his opinions. He has a right to find out whether they are true,—that is all. But, if a man charges others with being wrong, it is an imputation against their intelligence, it touches their pride, it hurts their sense of dignity; and they are not going to submit to it, if they can help it. So nine times out of ten, when people enter into an argument, they are not so anxious to learn the truth as each to conquer the other.

I wish now at the close to outline and elaborate, so far as I

\*Unless the variation is one that gives some decided advantage in the struggle for life.



may, one grand truth,—a truth that both conservative people and radical people need to learn. A study of the natural world around us everywhere reveals the fact that there are two forces at work,—forces that appear to be antagonistic, in perpetual conflict, but which yet are only helping on each other. They are the forces that we speak of in religion as the conservative and the radical forces. What are they in the natural world? Converse with some scientist about them, and he will tell you that these two forces are heredity and the tendency to variation. That is, suppose a chicken is hatched from an egg, heredity tends to reproduce precisely the kind of chicken that laid the egg. But there is also this tendency to vary, so that almost always you will find certain variations in size, shape, or color. So with the growth of every tree. From the acorn that is planted, you will find an oak that is substantially like the one that bore the acorn, but differing in minor details at least. So these two forces of heredity and variation are always at work; and these are the conservative and radical forces of the religious world. We need them both. If you simply allow the conservative force to become dominant, you go on age after age repeating the past and never improving on it. If the radical should become supreme, you would lose the type, the form. Everything would fall into chaos.

Human progress, then, means this,—enough of the conservative force to hold to the type, to the form, and enough of freedom and variation to develop, enlarge, widen, deepen, reach out to something higher and better along the lines that heredity tends to repeat.

So what we need in religion is not that people should tauntingly ask the question, *If you are right, why does not everybody agree with you?* nor that, on the other side,

persons should tauntingly reply, From the beginning of the world, the minority has always been right; and, therefore, I am. Neither of these is true. On both sides, we need to understand that perhaps the old is right; at least, the old has something that must never be lost, for the finest blossoms on the top of the tree would wither without the root. We need to keep our root firm fixed in the soil of the ages; and then we need freedom to blossom and develop new and finer fruit.

## HERESY AND CONFORMITY.

---

I WISH to address the thousands of persons who, in the modern world, have found out more or less clearly that they are heretics, but who still, for one reason or another, are conformists,—those who have not yet followed the logic of their thought, who hesitate to live out that which they believe.

As preliminary to this, however, I wish to discuss with you the significance of heresy, and let you see the necessity of this process through which we are passing at present. We talk about this as a transition age; and it is so, in a sense more important, perhaps, than any other that the world ever saw; and yet it is not so peculiar as this statement may make it appear, for something similar to this process has of necessity always been going on in a world where there has been growth. Heresy is nothing more nor less than a new growth,—something that the world has not seen before, some new twig, some new leaf, bourgeoning out of the old stalk. Every new thing that the world ever saw, every new step of advance, every new manifestation of life, was in its time a heresy. This is a part of the law of this planet of which we are inhabitants. Before men appeared, a similar process to this, only among the lower forms of life, was going on. At first, life appeared in very low types. Then came the fishes, the reptiles; but soon, above and beyond these, the birds appeared. The whole bird race was heret-

ical, as compared with the life that had manifested itself in the ages that had gone before. It was something new, that the world had not seen; and when, springing out of this bird race, there came one with more beautiful plumage, with a sweeter song, some new species, this again was heretical, not only as compared with the lower forms of life, but as compared with all its fellows. And when man appeared,—this being standing upright on his feet, thinking his own thoughts, saying *I*, and looking the heavens in the face,—the questioning began that has not ceased yet, and that never shall. He was the grandest of heretical manifestations. The moment that human life appeared, and the possibility of human growth, then came the perpetual manifestation of this process through which we are still passing. Orthodoxy once meant the lowest type of fetich worship. He who disregarded this, and began to worship the winds or the sun or the stars, was a heretic, as compared with all the past. He had taken a step onward, a step toward something higher. And when, by and by, out of all the fetichism of the ages there sprang the grand thought which Israel contributed toward the civilization of man,—“The Lord our God is one,”—that was heresy, the heresy that antiquated all the past, the heresy that condemned the old, the heresy that challenged the higher thought and the higher life of the race. Moses, then, in his day was one of the grandest heretics of the world. And, when Isaiah appeared with his higher thought, a new heresy came to disturb the complacency of those who had supposed everything to be established. When Jesus came with a still grander conception of God and man, this was a more magnificent heresy still,—the departure from that which was established in the light of the temple, the instituted religion of the people, something to be outcast, condemned, and trodden under foot. So it

has been from that day till this. Paul was a heretic. All the great leaders of the world's thought were heretics in their day. It is curious that the world learns so slowly. One of these men starts out, and leads the world forward. He gathers followers about him until he is considered respectable, and the ideas that he has taught the race are established. They are incarnated in institutions, churches, rituals, services. But these men seem to forget that the universe has not yet attained its final growth. They seem to forget that the very founder whom they revere was once a leader and dared to step out, even beyond the lines of the front rank of his age; and in his name they condemn, persecute, and kill some new man, who, manifesting the same spirit, the same divine impulse, the same wisdom of leadership, asserts the new truth that he sees, and challenges the race to one step further in advance. So it is the followers of the world's heretics who persecute the new heretics of each new age. And yet, as I said to you, this is a necessary part of the world's process of development.

Who is responsible for this? This is the point that I wish to make prominent and to emphasize. Who is responsible for these transition times? The man who is at ease in his old ideas, and who does not care to be disturbed, is apt to strike out with a sort of resentment against the man who awakes him, and asks him to open his eyes and see what is going on. But the man who asks another to see what is going on is not responsible for that which is going on. Galileo in his time was punished for what? Because he dared to look through a telescope and see something in the heavens that had never been seen before. But Galileo did not create the moons of Jupiter: they had been there all the while. He who swung them in their glorious orbits, not he who simply reported that they were shining,— He who created

the heavens and the earth,—he is responsible for whatever is. Spencer, Darwin, Wallace, and their compeers and fellow-workers, are not responsible for the fact that there never was any Garden of Eden, and that man was not created instantly out of the dust of the earth, and that suddenly the breath of life was not breathed into his nostrils by a supernatural act. These men did not create the fact of evolution,—the fact that we are developed from lower forms of life on the earth, and have come to be what we are by a purely natural process of age-long development.

Darwin did not make the fact that he reports. It simply means that a larger revelation from God has come to man,—that we see more than our fathers saw. But just as it was the old moons that had always swung in the heavens that Galileo saw, so it is the old truth, forever true,—as true while men were worshipping fetiches as to-day,—that Darwin and Spencer and Wallace and these men have seen and uttered for the enlightenment and lifting up of their race. Who is responsible, then, for these transition times,—responsible for the fact that we cannot keep still, responsible for the fact that a new enlargement of brain and a wider power of thought reveal things that had never been seen before? Who is responsible for all this? Certainly not the men who merely note their observations, and tell their fellows what they have found. If any one is to blame for the fact that you cannot keep an acorn an acorn forever, but that, placed in certain conditions, it will inevitably germinate and break open its shell, and turn itself into an oak, adding something to its size day by day, reaching out its branches wider and wider,—if any one, I say, is responsible for this, it surely is the one who is the origin of the force that is manifested in the acorn and the oak. And who is responsible for the fact that you cannot press down human thought,

but that it will germinate, will burst its old shell, will make room for itself? He who is responsible for this is surely he who is the life-force and the impulse by which this race of ours has gone forward from the beginning until the present hour. So this manifestation of heresy is not something to be deplored as the wickedness of any wicked men. It is not something to be lamented as the outcome of the restlessness of certain people who ought to be contented with what has been. It is a part of the result of the undying impulse of God manifesting itself through the life-growth of the race. It is God speaking to the world to-day, as he is said to have spoken to the leaders of Israel when, after they had gone out of Egypt, they stood trembling on the brink of the Red Sea, hesitating to cross: "Why criest thou unto me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward." There is the secret of heresy. It is God's voice, bidding the world up and on.

And yet it is not to be wondered at that men hesitate, that men tremble, that they even shrink, and wish that they might go back. Consider the condition of those poor Israelites to whom I have just referred. They had, indeed, borne a heavy bondage in Egypt. Release had been promised to them year after year. They had looked forward to just this hour of escape from the hands of their task-masters. They had come to the crisis point, and had left their homes. But a new danger—a danger appalling because unknown, a danger that seemed all the greater because undefined—stared them in the face. Then they remembered: "Yes, we did have hard work in Egypt,—heavy burdens were laid on our shoulders, more than we were able to fulfil was required of us; but, at any rate, we had a comfortable place to sleep, we had food assured to us every day, we had shelter against the storm, we had homes." And, however uncomfortable

they may be, there is a charm about that word "home" that makes one shrink from facing a wilderness. Here they were compelled to cross the rough sea, and go out, nobody knew whither,—go out into the desert shelterless, trusting to God; and men do not find it easy, when the trial comes, to trust in God, for food, for shelter, for leadership,—a leadership toward what nobody knows. A land was promised them, but it was far away. Years of toil and trouble were between them and it, and perhaps the possibility of death on the way. When they had reached it, they did not feel quite sure that it would be any more attractive to them than what they were leaving.

So it is not strange that these human hearts hesitate to obey even the voice of God, when he bids them go out into the unknown. I have all sympathy with those who shrink from doing it, perhaps more than you have who were trained in the Unitarian belief. You do not know what it means. I do. I know what it means to turn away from friends, and have them feel that you are turning away from them and taking a path that means final separation. I know what it means to hurt them by this course, to bruise their hearts, their sympathies, and have them feel that you are perhaps wantonly wounding them, have them feel that you are obeying a voice that is not divine and going a path that is not right. I know what it means to turn away from old associations, where you have become wonted, where everything is pleasant and agreeable, where there seems a pathway of preferment before you, where there are worldly advantages to be flung one side. I know what it means to shrink from the suggestion of the higher truth with a fear that it may be a voice of a tempter from beneath. I remember well the first time I ever read a Unitarian tract, feeling that I would give my life, if I dared believe it, and yet flinging it away with



fear. I know what it means to leave old associations, and go out without knowing whether you have anywhere to go or not; and it is not easy. I have only tender sympathy, not for those who refuse to obey, but for those who obey with aching hearts, for those who stand trembling on the brink, and who wait and look back a little. It always seemed hard the way Lot's wife was treated. I do not wonder at her. She did not refuse to go. She was going. I do not wonder that she wanted to look back towards home for a moment. Even though that home was in Sodom, it was home; and she was going to a place that was not home. Her fate always seemed to me a little severe.

Suppose a family who have been born and trained amid our New England hills make up their mind to emigrate to the West. They have found home and farm too narrow for them. They have learned that the boys cannot stay with them here, that there is no opening for them, and that they must seek a larger and a wider opportunity. They make up their mind to go. They sell their farm, pack up their goods, and are ready to depart. Do you wonder if then there comes over them a flood of loving memories of the life which they have lived here from childhood? Would you wonder if the mother should take a last look at the rooms, and shed some tears as she thought: "Here one of my children was born. Here I nursed another through a dangerous illness. Here we sat around the fireside in the evening, and laughed and talked and played together"? Do you wonder that the advantages of the new home become a little dim, as they are looked at through tears? and do you wonder that, after they have gained the new, though they do not repent it, they still remember with tenderness the old associations, and that it takes years for them to call around them those influences about which the sentiments can cling as they used to cling

to the old? We must remember — and this is not only true, but it is of practical power as a guide — that sentiment does not attach itself to anything because that thing is true. Sentiment is no guide at all as to the matter of truth. Sentiment means simply time, habit, association; sentiment is the weather color that comes over the old walls; it is the vine that springs up and clothes the nakedness of the new associations, smoothing off the rough corners. Sentiment can attach itself to anything to which we are wonted, but it takes time. No matter how much finer your new home may be, you cannot possibly gain this association or sentiment until time has given opportunity for its natural growth. So it is no wonder that people hesitate. And yet, if men allow sentiment to be the controlling power of their lives in matters of this sort, they not only retard the growth of their own souls, but they stand in the way of the welfare of their children. They barter, for a feeling, the higher life of mankind. And, when sentiment is thus allowed to be a substitute for conviction, it becomes an injury to the life, a wrong to the soul.

I wish now to pass in review as rapidly as I may a few of the classes of those who are hesitating, that, if possible, I may suggest some helpful word to each. There are certain classes of people who have found out that they do not believe the old, and still hesitate to associate themselves frankly and fully with the new. There are certain other classes governed by a different motive. A few of these I wish to point out, and touch upon some suggestions of assistance, of advice, of warning, if they are needed.

There are, first, large numbers of people who have found out that they are not orthodox, but who as yet do not know whether there is any spiritual home for them anywhere else; and so they are waiting for further light, or perhaps they

wait so long that they lose the impulse which moved them, and go no further, or, under the impulse of some reaction, they go back again. Some fear sweeps over them; and they rush back within the bounds which they left, certain there, as it seems to them, of a place of safety. What shall people like this do? I remember the time when I stood in precisely this position. I was invited to become the occupant of a Unitarian pulpit before I knew whether I was a Unitarian or not. I had simply found out that I did not belong with the old; but whether there was any place under the light of God's sky where I did belong I had not discovered. So there are thousands of people in this position,—the most of them, perhaps, in the pew. And, if you are in this state of mind and are in the pew, thank God for so much as that; for you are at least relieved of the necessity and the fearful responsibility of speaking from the pulpit to your fellows from week to week, every week of your life,—while uncertain as to which pathway you yourself should tread, pointing out a way for other feet. One thing: if you are a clergyman in this position, do not dare to speak any word that you do not believe with your whole soul. Leave unsaid a million words, if you will, but what you do speak speak out of your deepest convictions; and, whether in pulpit or pew, those of you who occupy this position, do not dare to stop. Convince yourself, by some process of thought, either that the old is true or that the new is true. Find some place in which you can believe with your whole soul, and do not rest until you find it. On the other hand, do not be in haste. Many a man and many a woman has been wrecked on some half-belief, because of too much hurry.

Take time. One of the hardest things for most people to do is to hold their minds in a condition of suspense. People want to settle down somewhere. To stand and hesitate is

painful. But you would better stand and hesitate until the last day you live than to make up your mind wrongly. How shall you be sure of the truth? You may not be able to be sure of it.

People have said to me, as though it were an apology for their course, I decided under one impulse or another, because I became hopeless of being able to demonstrate the truth of either side. You may not be able to demonstrate the truth of either side. But concerning two propositions, if one weighs them candidly, there must be more evidence in favor of one than of the other. As a preliminary step, take that which has more proof rather than that which has less. Go with that side which seems to you to be the nearest to the truth; and all the while and every day dare not to seal up your soul; keep it open for any new light, any new truth that may come to you, and be ready to heed a ray of God's sunlight as his direct command. Do not be alarmed because you find yourself in this condition, in this new fog. There is no surer proof that there is sunshine than the fact that you are lost in a fog-bank. There would be no fog in the universe if there were no light. It is sunshine that makes all the mist. There is sunshine above, beyond, and all around the fog-bank; and, if you have gone into it from this side, you will be sure to get out into the light, if you go through, just as sure as if you were to turn and come back. There are two ways of getting out of the Slough of Despond. Christian and Pliable both got into the Slough. Pliable went back, and got out of it in that way. Christian went through, and came out on the side towards the Celestial City. I believe that is the better example to follow.

Then there is a class of people who shrink and rush back into the past merely because they become frightened and, under the impulse of fear, cling to what they believe to be

a safe retreat. Tennyson speaks of its being a question whether we should disturb our sister's faith in "her early heaven"; but he forgets that this same sister with a faith in her early heaven has also a faith in her early hell which we shall disturb, and that it may be a question whether we had not better disturb that fear.

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes has sung, not, I think, as voicing his own thought so much as the thought of many others, this fear challenging new ideas : —

"Is this the whole sad story of creation,  
Lived by its breathing myriads o'er and o'er,—  
One glimpse of day, then black annihilation,—  
A sunlit passage to a sunless shore ?

"Give back our faith, ye mystery-solving lynxes !  
Robe us once more in heaven-aspiring creeds !  
Better was dreaming Egypt with her sphinxes,  
The stony convent with its cross and beads !"

Under the impulse of a feeling like this, men like Cardinal Manning and Cardinal Newman, and hundreds of others, have rushed back and into the old creeds, as though they were secure fortresses, a place of escape from modern thought. But it seems to me they forget that there may be good in the new as well as in the old. They forget the horrors connected with the Egyptian sphinxes and the life surrounding them. They forget the dungeon beneath the "stony convent" which was a refuge for so many weary souls; as a bird might build its nest in some old castle, some old Middle Age turret, unconscious of the horrors down deep at its foundations. It seems to me that it is worth while to disturb people, even if they are dreaming of beautiful things connected with the old, for the reason that the beautiful things are not all. In the old foundations are horrors, insult

to God, lack of hope for man. You have no right to fall back into a safe place, taking merely the sunshine and the joy and the hope, and forgetting all the rest.

There is another class of people — I alluded to them last Sunday — who do not believe in the old, yet hesitate, on account of personal interest or because of personal disability that will necessarily attach to their going forward into the new. I told you of a teacher in the West who had written me a letter saying that there was no Unitarian church there, and that if she lived out what she was she would become an object of suspicion, and might perhaps lose her place and the sympathy of the mothers of the young people whom she loved. I told you of two lawyers who had written me from Kansas and Kentucky that they would lose their practice if it were known what they believed. I was told, only yesterday, of a school superintendent, who creeps about from day to day for the sake of the position, trying to be friends with both sides, concealing the fact that he is a liberal at heart. He received a circular lately from the clergymen of the place where he lives, asking that those who received it should fill it out and return it. This would necessarily commit the one who filled it out to the old position or the new; and, if he did not return it, it would be attended by suspicion. This man was in great trouble because placed in such a dilemma, being afraid to avow his opinions. So you find hundreds and thousands of these people to-day, who are afraid, on account of some worldly disadvantage that will attach to them if they avow their convictions. It seems to me that it is time, if the world has not grown too old for it, that we had a few martyrs, to wake up the consciences of this generation to the fact that the battles of truth with error are not yet all fought out. If ever the time came when I could not live manfully in this world, avowing my convictions, even though I were

starved out of this into another, I would seek another, and see if there were anywhere where I might live as a man should. If a person cannot live and be true, I question whether Dr. Johnson was not right in what he said to a gentleman one day, who was engaged in a business for which the old doctor had not much respect. He urged him to leave it; but the man replied, "One must live, you know." The old doctor looked at him, and said that he was not quite sure of that. He did not admit the necessity of living under those conditions.

Then there is another class of people who are conforming from fear of hurting the feelings of their friends. I have in mind the lieutenant-governor of one of our great States, who told a friend of mine that he became a member of the old church when he believed in it. Children had grown up there, his wife and all his friends were there, and he had become a vestryman, and was prominent in the society; but, since joining there, he had become a pronounced liberal, and he said, "What can I do?" I know any number of persons who go to church nowhere, or to the old church, because an aged mother would be hurt or a father troubled by the avowed unbelief, as they would call it, of their child. It does seem to me that there is something more important than having the question raised as to the feelings of friends. Do as many a friend of mine has done,—be frank and outspoken with your liberalism, but with all be so sweet and holy and true in it that, if you do not convert your friends, you may at least convert them to the conviction that it is possible to be a saint in another faith than theirs.

Again, there is a class of people who stay where they are in the hope that they shall be able to modify and gradually change the climate of the old country in which they live, and make it conform to the warmth and the sunshine of our mod-

ern thought. Concerning these people who stay in the old church for the sake of modifying and leavening it, as far as my observation has gone, the result has generally been that these people have been repressed, so far as the grandest development of their own religious life is concerned, and that they have been injured without benefiting anybody else. I never yet knew of any old organization that was reformed from the inside,—never. By the time a thing has become instituted and organized, it has gathered round it so many vested interests that the people cling to it for the sake of those interests; and they are not going to surrender them on account of some person inside who is discontented. They say, You can go out, if you are not contented here; and they say it logically and consistently. Several doctors of divinity urged me to stay inside, when I thought of leaving the old church. Of those men, one is dead. The two foremost of them have been turned out of the church in which they lived, for heresy; and, if they have helped the old churches at all, it has been from the outside, as I have,—only, instead of going out voluntarily, they have been compelled to go.

There is another class of people who stay where they are avowedly on account of the advantages of their position; and they try to persuade themselves that they have a right to stay there. As a marked instance of this, take the case of many a clergyman in the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. There are hundreds who do not believe the essentials of their creeds, and who still stay where they are. They repeat the creed, but they take it with a mental reservation. They twist their consciences to adapt them to the institution, or they attempt to twist the creed into meaning something that they know it does not mean. Rev. Stopford Brooke told me in conversation in London that, at the time when he left the Church of England, he knew there were



hundreds of other young ministers who agreed with him essentially in thought, who talked about staying in and fighting for their position there, but who had not the courage to come out.

As an illustration, take the case of the professors at Andover, which is up at present, and likely to be up for some time, as it has gone before the Supreme Court for settlement. They do not believe the creed. They know they do not, confess they do not; yet they read it and swear to it. Why? Here is an endowment; and they are trying to turn that endowment from the purpose for which it was established, and make it accomplish results which the men who gave the money hated with their whole souls. I have no sort of question of the personal honesty of these men: I know and love some of them; but I cannot understand their system of ethics. I cannot understand how they can hold such a position. They do. They are noble men, sweet men, men trying to accomplish good in the world; but it seems to me they would sweep the sentiment of America with them like a tide, if only they would say, "We do not believe it, we repudiate it, we will not stand on it," and go out in a body. What an influence they might have for frankness, honesty, earnestness, in the religious life of the century!

One word with reference to certain persons, generally men. There are men and women both, I know, who believe in these ideas, perhaps, but do not dare to teach them to their children; who do not go to church at all, or go to some church occasionally to which they could not subscribe; who allow their children, or purposely arrange to have them, attend a Sunday-school where things are taught that the parents have no sympathy with; who believe that it is safe for themselves to know certain things, but not safe for the young or for children. What is safe for a person of any

age, except the truth? I cannot spend much time on these persons: perhaps they are not worth it. I have no great amount of respect for them.

Then there are men, and they are counted by the hundred and I fear by the thousand, in Europe and America, who cynically calculate on the good they will get in this world by conformity. They have no real convictions, nothing that one can appeal to. They go to church, if they go at all, precisely as they go anywhere else,—for the sake of being with their friends, for the sake of the social consideration. I was told in New York, the other day, of a prominent lawyer, who said frankly that he did not believe in the Episcopal creed, though he was a vestryman and doing everything he could to support it, as he would to support his club, or any other social institution in which he was interested.

I was told by a lawyer of this city a few years ago that he had no respect for the religious opinions of anybody in particular, but he went to the most prominent church and had a pew there, because it was a good thing to be with his friends. And he said, if Buddhism or Catholicism or anything else should be the fashion, he should conform in the same way.

Then there is a class of people, like Bishop Blougram in Browning's poem, who cynically choose that which they believe will bring to them the most of comfort and ease on their journey through life. The bishop is drinking wine with a friend after a sumptuous dinner, and discussing these great problems of belief; and he takes the ground, which any one may plausibly take, that it is difficult to settle them permanently, and for his part he chooses that which will bring him the most advantage as he goes along through life. He draws a comparison, and makes life a voyage, and says: Which will you choose? You can take a berth, a

cabin,—not very large, to be sure, but luxurious, with all comforts and everything that you can desire,—or you can choose a rough board and sleep on it. You cannot have everything your own way. I choose the cabin, with the comforts and luxuries. There are thousands of such people. What can I say to them? If they had a conscience, I might have something to say; but, when a man avowedly asserts a position like this, then there is no ground for moral appeal left in his nature. You can look upon them only with contempt, and try to avoid becoming like them yourselves.

And now a word or two more to bind up my theme and give it fitting close,—a word concerning this matter of heresy, this method by which the world gets on. Why should not people be brave to follow their thought when they remember that it is this way, and this alone, that the world grows ever to more and more? Why should not men cherish a new light that rays itself out of God's heart, when they know that in an infinite universe like this, in which is a finite race, growing age after age, there must of necessity be this perpetual growth of revelation, ever coming to something finer and higher? But, if any one is afraid, let him remember that God is still alive. God is still holding this old planet in his hand, still marking out its orbit. He is alive this morning, just as much alive as he was yesterday, as much as he was ten thousand years ago. And remember again that truth, a new truth, is just as old as an old truth. If a thing is true, it is eternal. It is only our discovery of it that makes us call it new. It is God's truth also, if it is truth; for he is the source, and the only source, of all truth. There are many people in the world who have a great reverence for age, for antiquity, for that which has been established for thousands of years. I wonder if such people ever take the trouble to think that the world was never quite so

old, quite so hoary-headed, if age makes wisdom, as it is this morning. Go back ten thousand years, and you will find the time of the world's childhood; and the thoughts of that time must of necessity be the child-thoughts of the world. The mature thoughts of the world's manhood are its latest thoughts. If you wish to reverence age, then reverence this morning, and the last truth that any eye of man has seen shining,—a new star out of God's eternal heavens.

You wish to be safe. So do I. Who is safe? Who is morally safe in this universe? Is he not the truth-seeker? For the truth-seeker is the only God-seeker. No matter where you are, no matter in what age of the world, no matter how far from the central point of any religion, no matter how feeble you are, you are all God's children; and, if there is a wish in your heart for the truth, that wish instantly brings the Omnipotent to your side. Every wish for truth is a wish for God. No man ever really wished for God without being folded in his arms. The one, then, who is seeking truth, trying to find it, trying to live it the best he may, he is the one who, in all ages and in all worlds, is safe.

## THE DUTY OF LIBERALS.

---

AS SETTING forth the attitude in which we stand to the past and in which liberals stand with an emphasis peculiar to themselves, and as hinting the duty which we owe to humanity in the light of what the past has done for us, I shall begin by reading the following verses, written by Mrs. Julia C. R. Dorr :—

“ Heir of all the ages, I,—  
Heir of all that they have wrought !  
All their store of emprise high,  
All their wealth of precious thought !

“ Every golden deed of theirs  
Sheds its lustre on my way ;  
All their labors, all their prayers,  
Sanctify this present day.

“ Heir of all that they have earned  
By their passion and their tears,  
Heir of all that they have learned  
Through the weary, toiling years.

“ Heir of all the faith sublime  
On whose wings they soared to heaven,  
Heir of every hope that time  
To earth's fainting sons hath given,—

“ Aspirations pure and high,  
Strength to do and to endure,—  
Heir of all the ages, I,—  
Lo ! I am no longer poor.”

As we contemplate the relation in which we stand to our own time and the question of the duty which we owe to our fellow-men and to the future, we need to take this point of view regarding what has come down to us by inheritance from all the past. We do not often enough think of our duty in the light of an obligation like this. Whatever we possess to-day of any value has come to us as an outright gift from this same toiling, struggling, aspiring humanity to which we belong; has come to us from God, the source of all, through this humanity as medium. If we think we have achieved something by means of our own brain or hands, the brain and the hands are gifts from God through this channel. All the inventions, all the discoveries, all the scientific achievement, all the search for beauty, all political progress, all industrial attainment, all that make up the civilization of which we are a part, have come to us from God through our fellow-men. And, of liberals, it can be said that they alone have entered upon the full, complete inheritance of all that the world has wrought. The inheritance indeed waits for others. It is as open and free to them as to us, but the grandest part of it all they have not yet enough faith in God and in themselves to open their brains, their hearts, and their hands to accept; for, certainly, the most magnificent treasure of the past that has been handed down to us is so much of truth concerning God, concerning man, concerning destiny, as makes up the achievement of the world until this present hour. And the liberal church, I say, is the only one that has yet dared, in high, grand trust in God, to take this as its own. We have not only the inheritance of political achievement, of industrial achievement, of artistic and scientific development, but we have entered upon the inheritance of the world's religious achievement. Not only one Bible, but all bibles, are ours; not only

one Saviour, but all saviors; not only one martyr, but all martyrs; not only one leader, but all leaders. All those who have done anything to help the world to find the right path, all that have dared to lead on the world to something newer and higher, all who have wrought to make humanity better,—these are ours in full fellowship; and we take to-day the result of all that they have gained. If that grand old saying, *Noblesse oblige*, be true of any one, it is certainly true of us; for the duty that devolves upon us corresponds with the achievement and the attainment of the present hour. Our duty is as great as our opportunity, as great as the gifts which we have received; and we have no right simply to enter upon this inheritance as parasites or as spendthrifts, and take it and use it without seeing to it that the world is left as rich, at least, as it was when we were born. Those who are truly noble and who truly appreciate what it means to be a son or daughter of God and a member of such a race as ours will not only see that they must leave the world as rich, but that they must do something to make it even a little richer than they found it. The duty, then, of liberals, in the light of their inheritance from the past, the duty of the faith which they have wrought out, their duty through the ministry of that faith to their fellow-men, is the plain and simple thing which I wish to urge upon your thought and your consciences to-day.

While it is true that liberals have received a larger inheritance, and therefore have inherited a larger obligation, than anybody else in all the world, it is true at the same time, and for a satisfactory reason, that the great majority of liberals perhaps feel less obligation than those who still adhere to the old faith. This is not a strange condition of affairs. It is perfectly natural and necessary, springing out of the process of transition through which we are passing.

For, as I have had occasion to tell you more than once, and I cannot tell it to you too often, we are passing through the mightiest and farthest-reaching revolution of thought that the world has ever known. But we have lost the old motives. So long as men believed that every one they met was living a brief probation on this planet, the end of which was to be eternal bliss in heaven or eternal misery in hell, and which depended upon whether they accepted certain religious ideas and conformed to certain methods of worship or not, no man who was humane could help feeling an incessant and continuous sense of obligation,—an obligation that superseded every other thought. But we have changed our conception of all that. We no longer believe that this life is a probation that fixes the eternal destiny of the soul. Hell is looked upon by most intelligent people as a barbaric myth. Heaven has become, in the minds of many, nothing more than an interrogation point. Thousands of liberals question whether there is any satisfactory evidence of any future life at all. The motive, therefore, that used to be so powerful over the thoughts and minds and hearts of men has become weakened. We are out of the old, and yet not quite into the new. And yet I believe with my whole soul that, if intelligent men did come to comprehend the situation, and to understand the relation in which we stand to God and to our fellow-men, to comprehend the relation in which this life stands to another life which is only a continuation of this,—I believe, I repeat, that we should find a mightier set of motives than any of which the past ever dreamed.

The first thing, then, that liberals need is a set of convictions. They are confused; they are disturbed, the universe is so large. The flood of light that has come has blinded people. They do not yet see their way clearly; and so they



are drifting. Shall I be very far from right if I say that the majority of liberal men and women cannot be said to be the possessors of convictions? \* They have prejudices, they have inherited notions, they have ideas, they have feelings, they have ambitions. But what is a conviction? A conviction is that of which a person has become convinced. But that implies thought, that implies a looking over the condition of the world's affairs. It implies something of a comprehension of the past, the present, and of the probable future. And yet it is without question a fact that the men who have convictions are the only ones who count. You all count when the census is being taken; but how many of you count as a positive force in the religious life of your time, of your city? How many stand for something, so that, if you were taken away, that which you supported would fall? How many of you mean anything more than a cipher, which coming after a figure may add a little to the force of it on account of the number, but which is of no value as it stands alone? I would rather be a voice, though a feeble one, than to be the loudest kind of an echo. How many voices are there among the liberals of the present time?

If you were to ask many men why they are in any particular church, the answer would be the same you would be obliged to give concerning a bit of drift-wood, if asked why it happened to be in a particular eddy,—it was floated by the current to its present position; it had nothing to do with getting there. Men and women are governed by questions of fashion, of convenience, of nearness to a particular church building, as to where their friends attend, if they go to church at all. Men and women easily marry out of one church into another, having no regard to the question of

\* Though this be true of liberals, it is more true of others. For it takes some conviction to make a man a liberal.

belief involved in the process. They are governed by all sorts of influences except that of minds made up in the light of independent, free thought. And yet, as I said, it is only the men and women who have convictions and who stand for them who make up the motive force of the world.

And now I wish to outline a few convictions of which you ought to possess yourselves, as free, intelligent men and women.

In the first place, you need to become convinced in your own minds as to which way this old world is moving under the impulse of the divine Power that is guiding it. Which way is God leading the world? You need to remember that God does not lead this world, considered as a moral and religious institution, except through the agency of men and women. As Luther said, "God has need of strong men." God works through the brain, the heart, the conscience, the enthusiasm, of men and women. Which way, then, in your opinion, is the world moving? Is it moving in the direction where we stand, towards which we are looking? People used to hold a conception of God as outside all this system of things, as working on it miraculously and magically; of salvation as a miraculous, magical process. The world is moving away from that thought and towards a belief in God as immanent in his works,—the life, the soul, of the world,—and towards salvation, not as a magical process or change in the heart, the soul, by which one is fitted to live in one particular place or is sent to some other particular place in the future world, but as being inherent in character. Man is a child of God; and he serves God not primarily by rites and services and rituals and prayers, but by right thinking and by right feeling, by right action, by becoming like him, in short. This is salvation.

Now, do you believe that the world is moving in this direc-



tion? If so, what? The result that should follow may be forcibly illustrated by an anecdote told of Abraham Lincoln. Soon after the opening of the war, some one came in, and said to him: "Mr. President, what makes you feel sure that God is on our side in this conflict? People at the South are religious. They believe that they are right. They are praying just as much as we are. How do you know that God is not on their side?" And the reply came, containing a principle that we ought never to forget. "It has never occurred to me," said Mr. Lincoln, "to ask whether God is on our side. The one thing I am anxious about is to find out where God is, and to get on his side."

Which way, then, is the world moving? If you have convinced yourself in your own minds which way, then it is your business to cast your total influence with this drift of the divine energy through the ages,—not to fight against God, not to be an eddy in the great stream of progress, not to be a reactionary force, but to find out where God is, and to get on his side actively, earnestly, helpfully, and not simply drift on the great current of affairs.

There is another conviction by which you need to be possessed; and that is concerning the importance of correct thinking, correct theory in religion. This world is dominated by thought ultimately. If you can only find out what people are doing, you need not ask them whether they have a theory or what that theory is. They reveal the real theory of their lives by their actions. It is the thought of somebody as to what ought to be done and how it ought to be done that determines all conduct, whether it be in religion or business or science or art, or wherever it may be. Since theory is of this supreme importance in religious thinking, it follows that false theory, wrong thinking in religion, is a source of waste and hindrance beyond any power of human

calculation. Just think of it for a moment! Suppose all the world could bend its energies, give its thought, its time, its money, its strength, to following after truth along intelligible lines towards intelligible ends, and do it for a year, you would hardly know the world by the time the twelve months had gone by. The great majority of men and women to-day are under the power of false theories concerning God, concerning themselves, concerning duty, concerning destiny, — false theories as to what needs to be done and false theories as to how to do it. And the world swings and staggers along in its orbit instead of sweeping under the impulse of the combined purpose of all its inhabitants along its shining pathway, as it might. The waste, the burden of false theories in religion, are simply incalculable. Take this conviction into your souls then, and do what you can to stop this waste, do what you can to lighten this burden, do what you can to clear the way and to help on the speedier progress of man towards a deliverance from those evils under which he has for ages staggered and groaned; for it is not simply in religion that these are felt. Did you ever stop to think how all-inclusive and comprehensive is the thing which we call religion? It is man's theory of life. It includes it, surrounds it, beneath and on all sides, and is above every other human consideration. First or last, a man's religious ideas determine what his political life shall be. They dominate his business and his method of conducting it. They dominate the world's education. They touch and control even the matter of the world's health,— as to the care of the body, as to how diseases are caused and how they are to be cured. There is no single practical department of human life that is not touched, shaped, made, or marred by the religious conceptions which control the actions of men.

Then there is one other conviction of which you need to

be possessed. We have given up our belief in a literal, fiery hell. Because we believe that we do not need to be saved from any such place, the first impulse is to feel that religion has nothing more to do or say to the individual, that is of any practical importance. We need to learn, however, that the need of right thought, right feeling, right action, of a correct religious life, both in theory and practice, is just as important to the individual under the new theory as it was under the old; that there is real salvation needed, real deliverance, as much as there was under the old theory. We need to become convinced of this concerning ourselves and concerning our neighbors, or we shall wake up by and by to learn that we have met with a fearful loss if we do not carry this conviction out in our practical living. Remember that every word you speak, every thought you think, every deed you do, your waking and your sleeping life, are making you what you are for bad or for good. They are shaping your eternal destiny for bad or for good. Because there is no hell, it does not mean that everything beyond the border is heaven, and that when people get there they are going to be all alike, because they are not doomed to a place of torture. Look at the common sense of the matter. Does it make any difference whether your boy goes to school or not; whether, if he goes, he learns anything either with his head or hands, whether he learns what life means, whether he is self-developed, whether he is trained and taught so that he can control his surroundings and master the conditions of life into which he is to be finally cast when he reaches years of maturity? Suppose he goes through Harvard. Does it make any difference whether he learns anything, whether he develops himself? It will make all the difference between his being a man or not when he is through, all the difference between his being master of his circumstances or their

victim. It will make all the difference between a life of happy success and one of miserable failure. And so, as you go out into the future, will it make any difference whether you go trained, educated, with those faculties developed that will be called into play over there, whether you go fitted for that life or whether you do not? And what is fitness? It is knowledge of God, knowledge of yourself, right relations to God, right relations to your fellow-men, true thought, right feeling, noble action. These are what will make you for all ages; and, if you neglect these things, you may find yourself, and I believe you will, in a condition that will be all the hell that you will find yourself willing to bear. There is just as much need of right thought, right feeling, right action,—that is, a true religious life,—under modern theories, as there was under the old. Nay, more; for, under those theories, even at the eleventh hour, by some magical process, in an instant you might be transformed and fitted for heaven. But now not even God himself can fit you instantly and magically for any heaven; and you will find only so much heaven as you have fitted yourself for by this training and development, through true thought and worthy action.

These, then, are the convictions of which you ought to become possessed. And now I wish to draw from these certain practical suggestions as to what you ought to do.

First, there ought to be utter, active, positive loyalty to your faith. Do you believe that you are right? If you do not, then you have no business to be here. You have no right to hold certain ideas because you have happened to come into their possession. It is your most sacred duty before God, for the sake of your fellow-men, to be sure that you are right, to do all that you can to find out that you are right; and you have no right to hold any ideas except those

you have become possessed of after using the best ability you have to make sure that they are correct. The religious forces of this world are divided enough already. If there is no call for a Unitarian church, then it is a crime that it exists. There is no excuse for any further schism in Christendom, except the excuse of a higher and imperative faith. If we have heard some word of God that others have not, then we must obey that, on peril of our souls. If we do not, if we are simply following our own whims and fancies, then we are neither loyal to God nor to our fellow-men. It is our highest duty, then, to make sure that we are in possession of the highest attainable truth where we are, to make sure of it as a personal conviction of our own souls, to make sure that we are not wrong, to make sure that the truth is somewhere,—that is, the most truth that we can practically attain at the present time—and go with that truth wherever it leads. This is your duty as a child of God and as a brother of your fellow-men. If you are sure, if you are convinced that you are following God's leadership, then it is your highest duty to be utterly and positively and actively loyal to this faith.

And here I wish that I could address every liberal in Europe and America on this point. It seems to me that we are all afloat as to what liberalism means in this matter of loyalty. Why are we tolerant of other faiths? Why do we demand that they be tolerant of us? Not because men have a right to hold wrong opinions, not because opinions are of no importance. Toleration is not indifference. Toleration is simply the result of the world's experience, coming to the conclusion that even false opinions are not so disastrous as the tyranny that assumes to compel other people by force to accept its opinions. But we, as liberals, are not loyal to God nor to our fellow-men when we give as freely to

support some other faith as we do to support our own,—when we support some other church, some school, that is teaching precisely the opposite doctrines to those which we believe. Mark carefully what I mean. We have no right to be illiberal towards persons, no right to be in opposition towards persons; but, for the sake of persons, we ought to be illiberal and at enmity forever with all untruth. Would you support a school which taught that two and two make five? Would you think you were doing humanity a service by giving money to pay its teachers? Would you support a school that taught false geography, false chemistry? You would not consider it liberal or generous or kindly. You would say, I am doing injury to people to perpetuate systems of false teaching that lead the children astray. If, then, you believe that you are right in the religious opinions you hold, you should not support opinions that are contradictory to them; for the welfare of the world turns upon right thinking about God and man. Your first great duty, then, is to be loyal to your faith.

We have seen that religion is the highest, the most important, of all human interests. Any great interest that men and women share in common tends to organize itself so that it may become a more efficient agent for its own propagation and the uplifting of men. So, when religion is organized, it becomes a church, no matter whether it goes by that name or not. Any organization of religious people for attempting to propagate their ideas and for benefiting and helping on mankind is, to all intents and purposes, a church; and the church, in this sense, is the grandest human organization which is conceivable. There is nothing so high, so important, so far-reaching, with such majestic claims on the reverence and services of men as the true church; for a church helps men and women to live. Other things are all subordi-



nate, play a smaller part. This is the one supreme interest of man,—how to live and develop properly the true ideal of manhood and womanhood. Since this is the true theory of the church, I hold it to be the unquestioned duty of every man to attach himself to some such organization, to become a part of this positive, active force which is attempting to lift and lead mankind. And remember that this is the layman's duty as much as the minister's, if not a little more. The minister is merely the servant of the church, appointed for some special talent which he may be supposed to possess to do a certain kind of work. But it is as much the duty of any other man or woman in Boston to help on the deliverance of this city from the evils that burden it as it is my duty. It is just as much your duty as mine to be true to God, to your highest ideals, and to do what you can to help your fellow-men. People, then, who hold these faiths in common ought to organize themselves into churches, no matter whether they have a minister or not. They ought to attend the meetings of this organization, no matter whether they have any minister or not or whether the minister be a brilliant or a stupid one. They ought to attend, not because they are interested in the minister, not because he gives them an address that stirs them, that rouses their thought, not because they love to hear him speak. They ought to attend for their own good and for the supreme human interests involved, because they feel the call to attend to great duties that reach down from heaven and lay their hands of consecration upon the head of every man and woman and child. Organize, then, and help to carry on this work without any regard to ministers,—with or without a minister. You are, of course, free to get such a minister as you want, if you can,—the best one you can; but the minister is no necessary, no essential part of the existence and

work of the church. It is higher than the office of minister; and it reaches deeper than the position which he is supposed to occupy.

Then the belief about the money relations in which men stand to the church ought to be thoroughly revised. The great majority of men look upon the church as a sort of beggar, that comes with pious call upon bended knees and asks for alms; and they give as they would to a beggar, simply to get rid of a personal request. But what is the real meaning and the real work of the church and its call for money? If the church is doing the work that it ought to accomplish, it is doing the noblest service possible for the welfare of mankind. And you, whether you are in the church or not, owe just as much to this organization as does the church member. You have received your money, brains, skill, power of thought which enabled you to win it, as a gift from humanity; and humanity, through the medium of the church, if that church be true and living out a lofty ideal, is simply asking for its own. You ought, then, to contribute money systematically, liberally, year by year,—not according to the necessity that is laid upon you, but according to your liberal ability. Contribute money, and then follow it, watch it, see that it accomplishes the work which it ought to accomplish. It is just as much your business to see where the money goes as it is the minister's. It ought to go to the lifting of the world. If it does not, the church that is using it is wasting it. If it does this, you ought freely, generously, continuously, and liberally to carry on such work, wherever you are.

Again, take the work of the Sunday-school, which in most of our liberal churches is begging for teachers,—for somebody to lend it a little aid, to make it more practical; and yet, on this theory of the church and the true work of the church,

there is no grander thing, no nobler service on earth than that in which we might engage in a true, enlightened, liberal, broad, progressive school for the teaching of religion to the children. It is magnificent when a man like Michel Angelo can shape marble into forms of enduring beauty. But it is a grander thing, it seems to me, to take the plastic brain, heart, and soul of a child, and shape them into the likeness of the living God, into a beauty that shall grow more beautiful while the ages last.

Instead, then, of thinking you are stooping, however grand a man you may be, however fine your brain or your education, however high your social or political position,—instead of thinking you are stooping, demeaning yourself, making a little concession, by going into the Sunday-school, you ought to feel that you are climbing up into the heights of God and being permitted by him to help to accomplish his noblest work. That is what you are doing, if you are accomplishing it in a true and noble way. There ought to be, then, if people appreciate the privilege and the grandeur of the work, competition as to who shall serve God and man in these noble ways.

The duty, then, of the liberal in the light of the past, of all that he has received as a gift of the ages that have gone, as he contemplates the present condition and looks out towards the possible destiny of his race, in this world and beyond it,—his duty is to become possessed of these great dominant convictions, and then lift his life to their level.

And what is the outcome? Making the darkness of the world a little lighter for those who do not see the way; bringing something of cheer and hope into hearts and homes that are desolate and discouraged; making the paths of life a little smoother for feet that are weak and that easily stumble; lifting up those that have fallen, trailing their garments

in the dust ; lifting off the burdens of the world's ignorance and blunders, and the results of those blunders, which are daily committed because of this ignorance ; lifting off the crushing weight of disease ; lifting off the more appalling weight of crime ; helping to solve the problems of poverty and the industrial problems of the world ; helping, in other words, to show the world the way to live,—to live in the light of God and in the hope of an ever-lifting, ever-widening future.

## The Loss and Gain of Religious Reconstruction.

---

ANY change involves the idea of giving up some things and taking others in their stead; and, if this change is gone through with voluntarily, it of course carries with it the thought that the person who makes it is conscious of the fact that the gain is to be greater than the loss, or else he would not choose to take the step. If one is compelled to such a change, even then it becomes a matter of interest to him to look over his condition, and see whether it be loss or gain, and how great is either the one or the other.

To a person who has been accustomed to think of any special form of religion as identical with religion itself, as having been infallibly revealed to men as perfect and final, the surrender of this particular form of the religious life means nothing more nor less than the giving up of religion itself. He feels that he who makes such a surrender has lost everything and gained nothing, that he has gone out into the world without God and without hope. I well remember that, when I faced the possibility of this religious reconstruction in my own case, it did seem to me as though all the great things of the religious life, at least, were in danger; and I shrank from facing the necessity which it seemed to me truth might lay upon me. And I know that my friends, when the time came that I did change, regarded me as having surrendered everything that was valuable in

the religious life, as having gone out into a world of uncertainty and of danger.

Now, as we are, for good or for ill, in the midst of a change like this, which is inevitable, which is coming to every man who freely and fearlessly thinks, we are brought face to face with the fact that there are two classes of people who, if I am correct in my estimate of their position, need special guidance, special help. There are large numbers of liberals who have taken their friends at their word, when they have said they were giving up religion in the act of giving up the old faith. Many of them have come to feel, as I know from personal knowledge of their condition, that they have practically given up the religious life. Perhaps they do not regret it. They may say that they are living now by the light of reason, according to the scientific method of dealing with the facts of this world; that the universe has become secularized; and that religion has no place in it, and therefore no farther office to fill in their development. I believe that such people as this are misreading the facts of the world, are misreading the significance of the change through which the world is now passing. I do not believe that the world is to become secular, that religion is to be outgrown and left behind. We have the light of reason and the scientific method for the use of that reason as our ultimate court of appeal; but we are to find, I believe, that reason and the scientific method are saturated with God, that they are only the manifestation of God's life, God's thought, God's way of leading his children. And I believe that a grander religion than the world has ever seen is to take the place of that which is visibly passing away. It is a new heaven and a new earth; but it is a heaven, and it is earth still. It is a new religion; but it is a religion grander, more glorious, than any that has been lost

to make way for its coming. I believe, then, that these liberals need to learn, if not to reconstruct their religion, to see just what it is that they have given up and what remains.

Then there is another class of people — some of them are in the old churches and some of them are now in the new — who have not yet thought their way far enough to get the comfort and the strength which I believe wait for them in the new thought. They feel a definite sense of loss, that God is farther away from them than he used to be, that his help is not so accessible as it was of old. They feel a sense of being forsaken,—alone, like a child wandering in the wilderness, having lost hold of the hand that once, as they at least believed, was leading them; and they are now trying unaided to find their way. There are large numbers of people in the old churches who hesitate to come into the new because of this sense of religious loss that seems to overcome them; and there are large numbers, who have been compelled by their reason and honesty to come into the new, who have brought this sense of loss with them, and they have not yet found any gain that is a satisfactory substitute for it.

I wish, if I may, this morning to help and lead and comfort; to establish the trust of these people by trying to show them that the things which have been lost are not the things which we really care to keep, and that the things which we gain are enough to more than make up for those that have passed away. A sort of profit and loss account in the light of this work of religious reconstruction is what I have in mind to set before you. I wish, then, a little in detail, so far as time will allow, to note specifically a few things that are lost and a few things that are gained.

There was a sense of being at home in the old universe that it will take a good while to find in the new, even if we

ever find it in precisely the same sense. This sense of loss exists for two reasons. In the first place, we were accustomed to the old; we had adjusted ourselves to it; we felt at home in it. All of its phases were familiar to us; they were part of our waking thought and of our sleeping dreams. We had been trained in this belief concerning God, man, the world, and destiny until they were almost a part of the very substance of our brains; and of course we felt at home in them. Then we felt all the more at home because the universe was so small as compared with what we now know it to be. A little universe, no larger than the present known orbit of the moon, was something that a man could grasp. He could think that kind of a world. It began only a few thousand years ago; it was going to end in a little while. It was created for a perfectly distinct and definite purpose; it was being governed and guided in a perfectly distinct and definite way towards a definite result. The whole idea could be grasped. It was a conception one could carry with him; but it is gone, and we are lost in infinity,—a universe that has for our imagination neither beginning, limit, nor end. And though we believe ever so firmly in “some divine event, towards which the whole creation moves,” it is a matter of faith rather than of knowledge; and what that far-off, divine event is we can, at most, but very dimly perceive and imagine. The universe is so large to our modern conception that our brains, our hearts, our whole lives, seem all out of doors, left shelterless and alone. We are not yet adjusted to this new thought about it.

Now, what are some of the things to be said to these classes of persons of which I have spoken,—those with this definite sense of loss?

In the first place, they have lost the old, near, simple, tangible thought of God. The beautiful old Bible opens with



the story of God's having built the world and made a garden in it, and then of his coming in definite shape and walking in this garden in the cool of the day, and talking familiarly with this first man, his child whom he had created. All the way along in the early part of the book there are stories of God's appearance in this way for some special reason; and so there was this sense, to him who was brought up in these ideas, of God's being very manlike and visible, that he could come to the foot of God's throne, that God might be seen, perhaps be touched. I know in my childhood prayers I had a very definite outlined picture of the Father to whom I was praying. I believed that I could take my little sorrows and troubles to him just as I could take them to father and mother, and that he would hear me, and that, if he did not take them away, he would give me some peculiar strength to bear them. It was very real. God was very near, very close, in those old days, to lonely, hungry, childlike human hearts. And there is thus a sense of loss to those who were brought up with this conception of God in the thought that now they must think of him as infinite, as perhaps only the soul of the world, only the life of this great mechanism called Nature. They try to outline him, try to locate him; but their reason forbids. They wonder if any longer he hears them, if he cares for them, if indeed he be conscious at all, or if he be not so absorbed in looking after his great worlds that there is no place in his thought or his heart for them.

But let us consider. Since God is infinite and man is finite, at any definite stage of human advance the thought that people will hold concerning God can only be the highest and best that they are then capable of. During the childhood of the world, the thought of God was childish, just as our thought of him was childish during our own personal childhood. But, as the world grows to manhood, it must

leave behind it childish things. God must become greater than he was ; and, at every single step of this advance in the history of the world's theological progress, the giving up of this old conception of God must have seemed like atheism. Suppose you go to the idolater, who has been accustomed to image his god in marble or stone or wood, and detach his thought from that, and tell him that God is spirit, as Jesus told those who were with him in his day ; and to him at first it would seem as though his god were utterly lost. It must be so. But the process through which we go in this progress of ours seems to me like that which a man makes from a cosey, quiet, little valley, as he climbs the mountain-side to some lofty table-land. Everything was near to him while he was in this little, secluded valley ; but, as he begins to rise, he does not lose the valley. The valley is there, the same quiet, cosey nook that it was before : only the world grows larger. The new thought includes all that was true, that was sweet, sacred, holy. It keeps all that. It includes it in the larger sweep of things that the eye and the imagination take in. So I believe we may say that no single thing that men ever dreamed about God of noble, of beautiful, of helpful in the past, is ever lost out of an intelligent man's conception of God in this modern world. God does not become less than he was when we thought of him as tangible, visible, portable. There is nothing lost from the infinite heart. Neither has God withdrawn himself from us. We lose the sense of him because he is so vast. Suppose a father should take his little child to see Mt. Washington, and after he had reached the base of the mountain should conclude to take him to the summit, that he might gain the magnificent view from there. On his way, he gets lost in the forest ; and the little child asks, "Where is Mt. Washington?" He sees round him only the woods and the stones and the common soil beneath

his feet ; and yet he is folded all the time close to the mountain's heart. I believe that God is not farther away from us than I used to think him when I prayed to him as a little child. I believe that, if we use the widest sweep of our intellects and the noblest intuitions of our hearts, we shall think of him as closer to us than ever in all the world before, closer in his thought, closer in his love, closer in his tender, watchful care. He is nearer than our very lives ; for only in him do we live. He is here, close by my side as I speak to you, close to you. Every thought of your heart that reaches out towards him meets him ; every outstretching of your hand, however blind it be, touches him ; every action of your lives, waking or sleeping, is dealing with God first-hand.

The old conception of God was of a being who was partial, who was cruel, who possessed attributes repulsive to our moral nature and contradictory to our intelligent thought. If you study the whole conception, instead of picking out here and there only those things which are beautiful and which you would like to keep, you will find that there was much in it that you would not desire any longer ; while the present conception of him is as the All-perfect One. And, if there be mists and clouds, we must remember that it is the sun that lifts the mists into the sky ; and, after they are lifted up, it there dissipates them, so that they become invisible, or else pours them down over the thirsty earth as beneficent rain. So it seems to me that this changed religious conception involves the loss of nothing of worth, but a gain of everything that is valuable.

But I must hasten to note another point,—the change from thinking of Jesus as God to thinking of him as a man. Jesus was very dear to my heart in the old days. It seemed to bring God close to us to think of him as wearing a human

body, walking the earth among his disciples, leaving his commandments to be the guide of future times. I do not wonder that people mourn sometimes, and sadly say of these liberals, as the disciples said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him"; that they should rebel at the idea which modern thought compels us to take of Jesus of Nazareth. In the old thought of Jesus, the Father was almost, if not quite, practically lost. You will find that most persons who believe in the deity of Jesus to-day, think of him almost exclusively as God, direct their prayers to him, look to him for comfort, help, sympathy, guidance; and it was very sweet to think of him as being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, sharing our humanity, and so being able to feel with us all the experiences of our lives. But, on the other hand, you must take the whole conception, not a part of it. Jesus was a very essential part—the central part—of a system of things that represented God as fighting a losing battle for the control of his own universe. It represented him as having permitted the overthrow of his plans, after he had created the world and had made man perfect in his own image. Jesus represented a thought of despair for the main part of the world, and of hope for only a few. So, if we think of him as a part of this system, for the sake of being rid of the system we will gladly give up anything that might have promised comfort and cheer in the world by his personality. But we do not lose anything of all this revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Whatever there was that was divine in Jesus, whatever there was that was hopeful, comforting, sweet, inspiring, is all there still. So much of the glory of God as shone out in the face of Jesus Christ shines still in the face of Jesus, the man and brother. And, then, our conception of humanity is glorified by the thought that there is

not this gulf between us and God that needs to be bridged, and that all human brains and all human hearts and all human lives are open to the influx of the divine. Jesus was not separated from us in kind,—only in degree, only peculiarly filled with the spirit of the Father. He was a comforter and a helper, an example of what any of us may be and may do. It seems to me, then, as we look at it all round, that the changed conception of Jesus only brings God nearer to the world and leads the world nearer to God.

There is one other point that I must note, touching the changed conception that we hold concerning the Bible. It is a real comfort to many hearts, I have no sort of doubt, to believe that there is a book which contains the infallible mind of God; that they need not doubt and question over these great matters of God, the universe, and human life. It is a comfort to know that they can open a book and find there a solution of all the problems that otherwise would be so troublesome; that a man can feel that he possesses a guide in all that he has to do. Yet there are certain other sides to this. This guide teaches all through its earlier parts especially, but also in the later parts, a morality that we can no longer accept. It is full of mistakes in matters of science and in questions of history. It is full of contradictions and difficulties that perplex and trouble the tender heart. These make it impossible for us to believe that it can be an infallible transcript of the divine wisdom. And then, again, if we think that God gave to only a small fragment of the world his perfect will in one perfect book, we must think him a partial God. We must believe, on that theory, that he left the great majority of his children without any definite knowledge of him, and left them under the doom of a condemnation that is endless,—left them to wonder and question and stumble and fall. And the heart of the world, if it be

a tender heart, cannot bear such a thought as that of our heavenly Father. Even if I could to-day go back to the Bible with my old ideas about it, I should do it with a great pain at my heart, and wonder why our Father showed himself a tender and loving Father to only a few, and a Father neglectful and forgetful of the great majority of his children on the earth.

There are some other things that we lose in losing the old faith. I will only hint them: I need not argue concerning them. We need to remember one thing, however,—that this old system, which is embodied in the creeds of the old churches, is a logical system, bound together part by part, that stand or fall together. Men have no right to pick out certain things in it that they happen to like, and say that they will keep them, and pass by certain other things that they do not like, and say, Those we will leave one side. They all belong together, as parts of one system. If you take the system, you must take them all.

In losing these old theories, we lose what we are relieved and thankful to lose,—the doctrine of the ruin and the total depravity of man. This doctrine of hopeless destruction and despair is an essential part of the old system, the very foundation of it all; and you have no right to surrender that, and keep other parts that you are willing to preserve. We lose the belief in the devil,—that being who divides the rule of the universe with God, according to the old system. He is the king and the lord of this world; he reigns in the great majority of human hearts, and is to make them and keep them his subjects forevermore. We lose the doctrine of hell. We lose, also, the old doctrine of heaven along with hell. If we lose one of them as a definite place in which people are confined, we must, I think, logically surrender the other, also, as a definite place in which only the

happy can abide, and where one, if he may abide, must perforce be happy. We gain instead of that thought a conception of human destiny that infinitely transcends the old. These are some of the losses and some of the gains involved in the religious reconstruction through which the world is passing.

I wish now to outline for you as completely as I may, in the time at my disposal, what I conceive to be the demand of a perfect religion for the world.

A complete religion must match and satisfy the whole man. It must match and satisfy the intellect, and, though it may transcend it, it must not contradict it. It must match the heart. I believe that these demands of the heart of men for comfort, for help, for hope, for sympathy, are created by the nature of things, and that they are legitimate, and that no conception of religion that does not comfort men can by any possibility be a complete conception.

Then a complete religion must be the master of practical, mighty motives,—motives grand enough and strong enough to lift human lives, to mould and shape them in accord with their ideals; and it must have a hope as magnificent as the dreams of the human soul,—a hope for the future to match the eternal preparation of the past that has led us up to this present hour.

Now let us for a few moments review the old and the new in the light of these demands as to what a complete, perfect religion ought to offer to our humanity. I said that a perfect religion must satisfy the intellect, must be consistent with the highest, clearest, freest thought of the world. It takes only a very superficial study of the old conception to find out that, at whatever point you examine it, it fails to meet the demand of the human brain. This theory of the universe, of God, of man, of the origin of evil, this

explanation of the present condition of the human race and its prevision of human destiny,—all these are an affront to reason. They do not simply transcend reason, but they contradict it at every point. They are not above reason: they are unreasonable. But the conception that modern thought presents to us is, in the very nature of things, reasonable; for it is that which human reason has discovered. Man has at last dared to believe that in thought as well as in heart he is made in the image of God. He has dared to look out over this universe, seeking simply for truth, buoyed up by the great underlying faith that every line or fragment of truth he may discover is just in so far a revelation of God. And whatever truth has been discovered is thus in accord with reason; for reason has found it, and reason is satisfied with it. And we are compelled perforce to accept the conviction that, since all of the universe that has been explored is rational throughout, it must be rational all the way through. Though there be so large a part of it at present undiscovered, the reason of man rests in the confidence that, when it is found, it will be in accord with the highest human thought, as it is an expression of the Divine. The conception of the nature of the universe, of the origin of man, of human civilization and development to the present hour,—all these things have been discovered and verified, as far as they are known, by the reason of man in the light of the scientific method; but they are none the less religious for that. For in this rational conception of things we believe that all truth is only in so far a manifestation of the divine mind.

And this theory of things, so far as we can read it, is also satisfactory to the human heart. The old conception of the universe, though a man might believe it with his whole soul, and though he might have persuaded himself that, having



accepted the terms of salvation, he was safe, was still a heavy burden for him to bear. The thought of the condition of his fellow-men, of their possible destiny, the sight of human ill, human cruelty, human pain,—all to be accounted for as the result of sin, as the infliction of punishment on the part of God, and as to be continued forever in the future, and in that future no alleviation, even increasing in horror age after age,—this was something that the intellect could not explain not only, but that a tender heart must forget or must become hardened to endure.

As illustrating how this belief, this old conception, impressed one of the noblest men of the old faith, I wish to read to you a paragraph by the late Dr. Albert Barnes, who was a Presbyterian, one of the noblest preachers of this generation. He wrote one of the most widely used commentaries of the New Testament, and was himself a most lovable and loving man. Hear what he says, as he looks over the world and thinks of death and sin and suffering and of the future destiny of men in the light of the old faith : —

“I have read, to some extent, what wise and good men have written, I have looked at their theories and explanations, I have endeavored to weigh their arguments ; for my whole soul pants for light and relief on these questions. But I get neither. And, in the distress and anguish of my own spirit, I confess that I see no light whatever. I see not one ray to disclose to me the reason why sin came into the world, why the earth is strewn with the dying and the dead, and why man must suffer to all eternity.

“I have never yet seen a particle of light thrown on these subjects, that has given a moment’s ease to my tortured mind. Nor have I an explanation to offer, or a thought to suggest, that would be of relief to you. I trust other men—as they profess to do—understand this better than I do,

and that they have not the anguish of spirit which I have. But I confess, when I look on a world of sinners and sufferers, upon death-beds and graveyards, upon the world of woe, filled with hosts to suffer forever; when I see my friends, my parents, my family, my people, my fellow-citizens; when I look upon a whole race, all involved in this sin and danger, and when I see the great mass of them, wholly unconcerned, and when I feel that God only can save them, and yet he does not do it,—I am struck dumb. It is all dark, dark, dark to my soul; and I cannot disguise it.”

Those are the words of one of the masters of the old faith concerning the difficulty which this theory presented both to his head and heart.

I said, also,—I shall touch the above point again,—that a theory of the world which should constitute a complete religion must not only satisfy the head and the heart, but must be a sufficient motive force to control human thought and mould human action. The old theories were hopeless. If one believed that he was foreordained to be saved, why make any effort? If he believed that he was foreordained to be lost, effort was useless. One could not, under that theory, have any motive for doing more than to try to save his own soul, and possibly a few of his neighbors'. He could not feel that he was part of a grand scheme, in which he was co-worker with God for the deliverance of all.

But think a moment. Rouse yourselves to the magnificence of the theory of things which modern science has revealed to us concerning the origin, the nature, and the destiny of this grand race of ours. No matter where we started, no matter how low down, however near the animal, we have climbed up to this magnificent outlook that we occupy at the present day, and are surrounded on all hands

by forces of which we are only beginning to understand the nature and of which we are only beginning to gain the control. This old world is a storehouse of energies, thrilling, pulsing, with the very life of God; and we co-operate with God at every turn we take in subduing this world. We can, and we will, place it under our feet. We can, and we will, abolish poverty, crime, sorrow, sin,—everything but death; and death we do not wish to abolish, for it is the gateway through which we take the next step towards the higher life. We can control this old world, we can develop ourselves into the image of the Eternal One. And what does all this mean? It means simply that we are developing and perfecting these personalities of ours into a fitness to overleap the gulf of what we call death. And so this modern theory opens for us a scene of eternal advance,—not advance for a few, advance for all. We are working with God then,—not selfishly for the salvation of our own souls, but every step we take in making ourselves noble must be through the manifestation or use of those powers which are noble and which only find play for their exercise as we deal with and help our fellows here. We are working that we may lift the load of sorrow and grief from all mankind; we are working for the deliverance of the whole creation that is groaning and travailing in pain until now; we are working for a future that includes not only the highest, but the lowest, not only the best, but the worst, and that means the deliverance and the final development of every human soul.

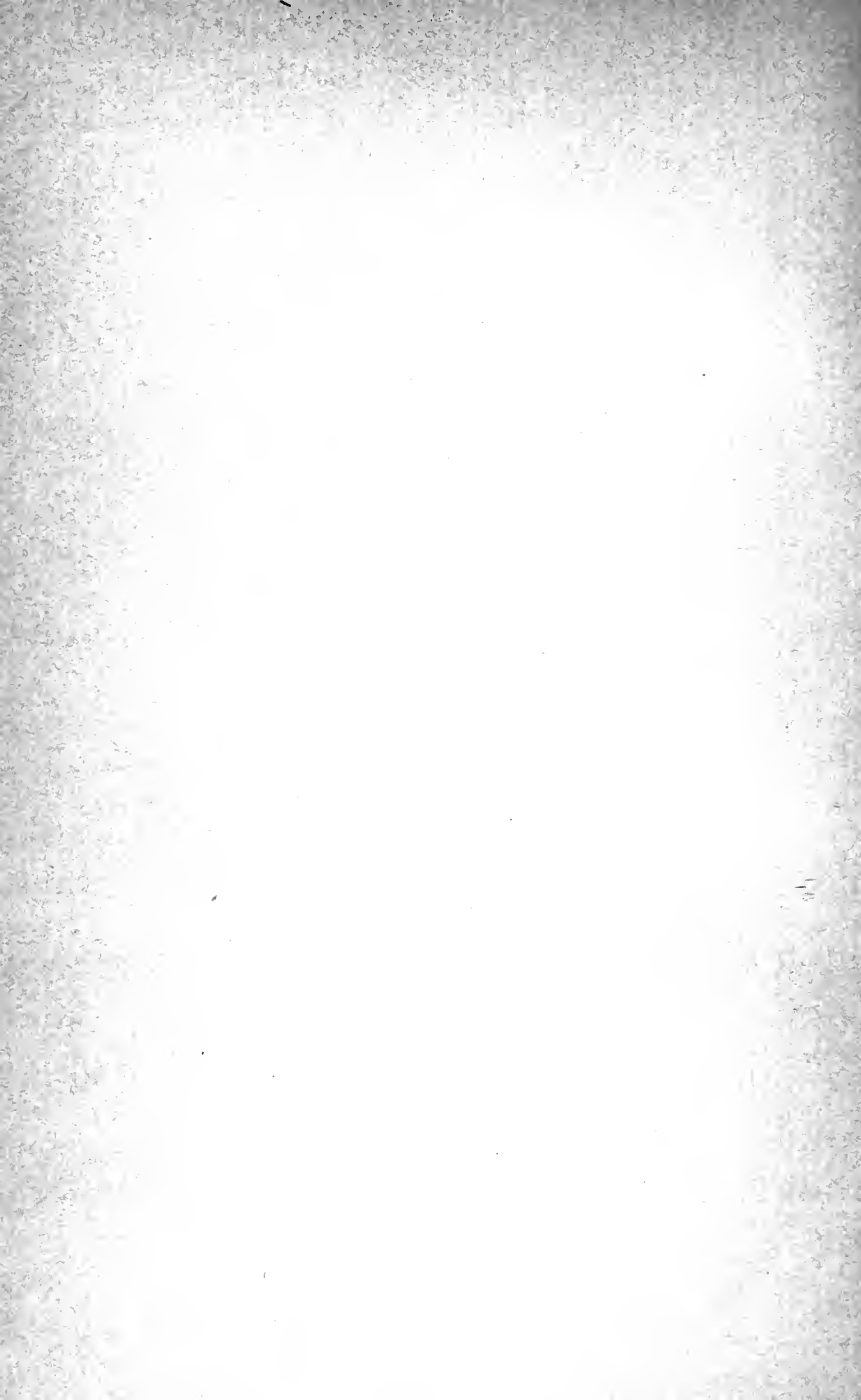
This conception of religion, then, that we hold to-day, as compared with the old, takes up into itself, just as the evolution of the race does, everything that was of any worth in the past, keeps it, and carries it forward. Nothing good in the old religion has ever faded out. Only the imperfections do we lose; and we gain a grander thought than the world

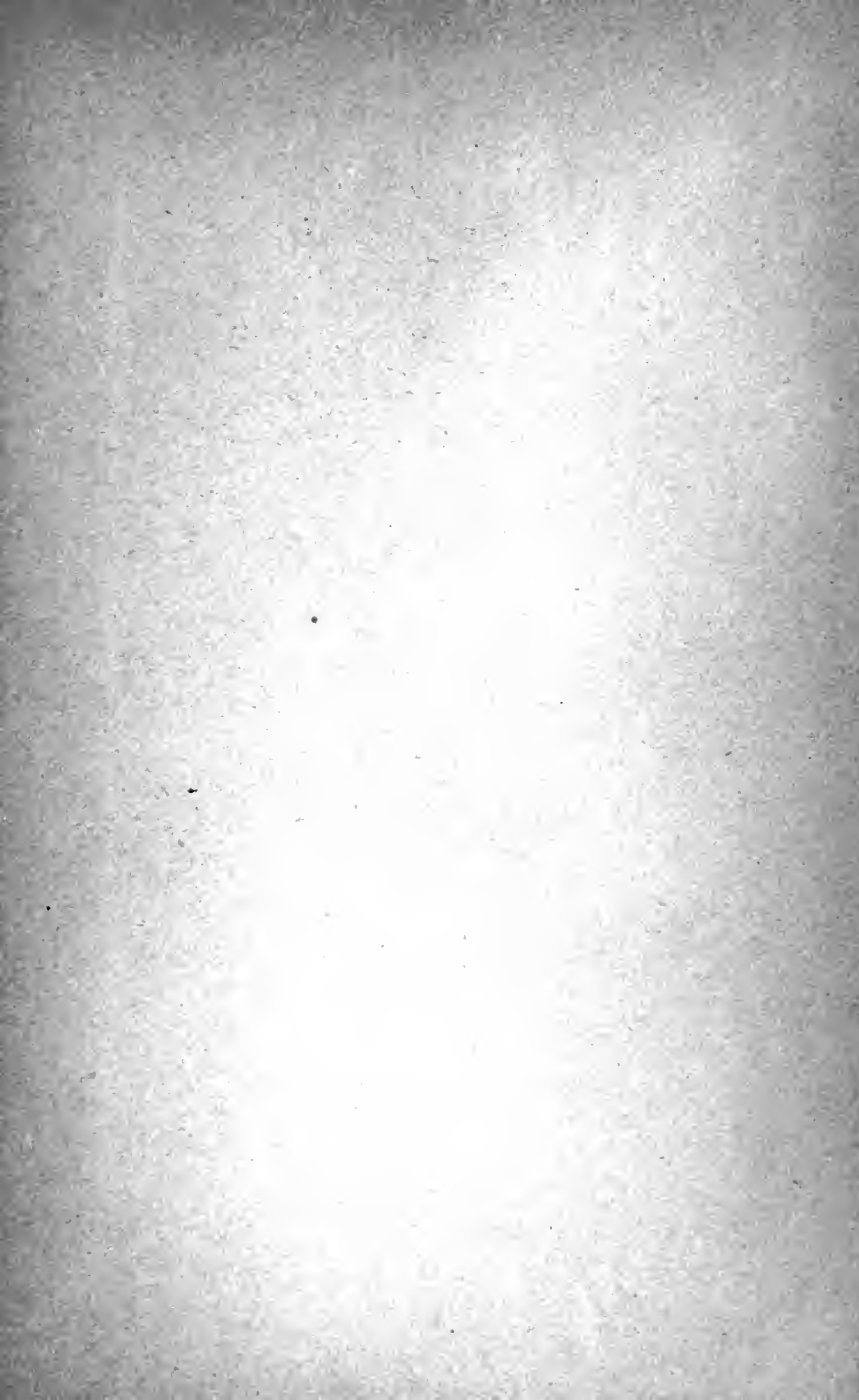
has ever known. As I compare even my own experience of the past with the present, I think of myself as having been living in the twilight world of an underground cavern, seeing only dimly, as shadows, wondering at the reflected images of things, confused, lost, and practically comfortless; while now it seems to me that I have escaped, that I have come out and up into the upper air. The green fields are about me, God's winds fan my face, the blue skies are overhead, his sunshine fills and encloses all; and, when the night comes, the hosts of stars come out with their suggestions of infinite possibilities to be revealed in the days that are before. And so, instead of having lost anything, religion seems to me to give us a new and grander God, a grander universe, a grander man, a grander hope than till this hour the world has ever seen.

---









General Library  
University of California  
Berkeley



YC134925

86129

BX9843

S3

